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A history of the  
Presbyterian Church in















HISTORY  
OF THE  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
IN IRELAND,

COMPRISING THE CIVIL HISTORY OF THE PROVINCE OF ULSTER,  
FROM THE ACCESSION OF JAMES THE FIRST:

WITH A  
PRELIMINARY SKETCH OF THE PROGRESS OF THE REFORMED RELIGION  
IN IRELAND DURING THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

AND

*In Appendix, consisting of Original Papers.*

BY

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND.

"Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase. For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers:—shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?"—*Book of Job.*

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## P R E F A C E

TO THE

### FIRST EDITION OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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THIS volume of "The History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland" appears under very peculiar circumstances. Towards the end of March 1851, Dr. Reid died, leaving a very considerable portion of the work\* in a state fit for publication; but, on looking into it, his executors were at a loss to determine what was to be done with the manuscript, as it terminated very abruptly, and as it was scarcely sufficient to form a volume. The author had directed them, in his will, to dispose of that portion of his library which related to Irish Presbyterian affairs, and had instructed them to offer it for sale, in the first instance, to the Irish General Assembly. The terms were easily adjusted, and as I happened to be the Librarian of the Church, this literary treasure was thus committed to my custody. It had, I believe, meanwhile occurred to the executors, that it would be very desirable if the work left unfinished could be carried down to some resting point in the present century, and that Dr. Reid's successor in the chair of ecclesiastical history connected with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland might be, not unreasonably, expected to proceed with the narrative. I was now in possession of materials for the purpose, and I was applied to, about six or seven months after his decease, with a view to ascertain whether I would undertake this service. I must confess I did not feel at liberty to decline the proposal. I was

\* See page 272 of this volume, note 39.

quite aware that it might be somewhat difficult to build on another's foundation, but, at the same time, I felt it due to the Church, which has assigned to me the position I at present occupy, to make the attempt. All Dr. Reid's papers relative to the subject were accordingly placed at my disposal, and I set to work without delay. I think it right here to enumerate the manuscripts of the deceased of which I have had the use.

*1st*, Three small duodecimo volumes, containing historical collections relative to the Irish Presbyterian Church. These refer chiefly to the period over which Dr. Reid had already travelled, but two of them have supplied me with some valuable hints. One of them furnishes a list of all the congregations of the Synod of Ulster erected from 1726 to 1840, with the date of the ordination of the first minister of each, as well as some other statistical tables of a similar character, which I have occasionally found useful.

*2d*, A catalogue of publications by Presbyterian ministers of Ireland from the early part of the seventeenth century to the present time.

*3d*, A list of the congregations composing the Synod of Ulster and Presbytery of Antrim, with a brief account of each congregation. This small volume, in which there are comparatively few blanks, gives the date of the establishment of each congregation, and the names of the successive ministers, with the dates of ordinations and deaths. It seems to have been compiled with uncommon care, chiefly from the minutes of the General Synod. I have frequently proved its statements, and found them singularly correct. It has saved me the trouble of continual and laborious reference to the minutes, and, by means of its chronology, has at once enabled me to test the truth of doubtful historical relations.

*4th*, Four small duodecimo volumes of memoranda. Three of



these relate entirely to the previous history, but the fourth contains copious extracts from the minutes of the Scottish Secession Church. To this I have made frequent references, under the title of "Secession Records."

*5th*, A number of loose papers. Among these are two small leaves, on which Dr. Reid had been apparently writing something like a first draft of the passage which he left unfinished, and of one or two preceding paragraphs. On a sheet of the same description are several references to Dr. M'Kerrow's "History of the Secession," and the dates of the ordinations of a considerable number of the early Secession ministers of Ulster. Another small sheet contains a list of the more remarkable transactions in which the Irish Presbyterian Church was engaged from 1727 to 1760, ranged in chronological order. Another paper supplies a more succinct statement of the same description. There are a few other manuscripts in this collection, but they are still less important.

I have entered into these minute details that the public may see the exact amount of assistance I have received from the papers of Dr. Reid. He had, no doubt, maturely considered the bearing of the various transactions which he intended to describe; but he did not leave behind him any document to indicate either the light in which he viewed them, or the opinion he had formed of the parties interested. He is not, therefore, in any sense, responsible for any sentiment I have expressed in reference to any subject in the course of the narrative.

The books purchased by the General Assembly from the executors of the deceased author have mainly supplied me with the information which has enabled me to complete this history. These works, which my predecessor had been laboriously collecting for upwards of thirty years, and many of which contain important notes in his own handwriting, amount to between four

and five hundred volumes. Some of them are now extremely rare, and had they not been collected by Dr. Reid, I might have sought for them in vain. Throughout the year during which I have been occupied with the completion of this volume, I have had the use of all the manuscript minutes of the Synod of Ulster, and of the Irish Burgher and Antiburgher Synods. I have likewise had in my possession the minutes of several of the presbyteries of the General Synod, and of the sub-synod of Derry. I have been also favoured by kind friends with the perusal of a considerable number of scarce books and pamphlets not in the collection of Dr. Reid.

Some readers may, perhaps, object to the amount of notes appended to the narrative, and I must admit that, under other circumstances, I could scarcely venture to justify the arrangement. My apology is, that, in the limits assigned to me, I could thus only furnish much information which I felt it desirable to supply. It was considered inexpedient to extend the publication to another volume, and had I not introduced a large quantity of matter into the notes, I could not, in the comparatively short space which I occupy, have discussed in detail the transactions of upwards of a century. Besides, as this portion of ecclesiastical history has never been previously investigated, I considered it necessary to refer minutely to the original authorities in support of the various statements adduced.

In reference to that part of the work written by Dr. Reid, I have to state that it appears here exactly as it proceeded from the pen of the author. According to an arrangement made with his executors, I have not been at liberty to modify a single observation, or, with the exception of obvious clerical errors, to alter a single word. Knowing, as I do, his remarkable accuracy, I have the utmost confidence in the correctness of his narrative; but the arrangement I have mentioned, and into which I most

willingly entered, has relieved me of a responsibility which I might otherwise have felt in regard to his portion of the history. I now send the whole into the world, in the hope that an indulgent public will make due allowance for the circumstances under which the work, nearly twenty years after the appearance of the first volume, has been at length brought to a termination.

W. D. KILLEN.

BELFAST, *April* 5, 1853.





# CONTENTS OF VOLUME THIRD.

## CHAPTER XXII.

A.D. 1701-1709.

	PAGE		PAGE
Increasing troubles of the Pres-		The Sacramental Test . . .	20
byterians on account of their		Originated in England . . .	<i>ib.</i>
marriages . . . . .	1	Introduced into the Irish act by	
Memorial to the lord-lieutenant	2	Queen in council . . . .	23
Embarrassment of government		Its reception in Ireland . .	<i>ib.</i>
thereon . . . . .	4	Sir Theobald Butler's speech .	24
Death of King William . . . .	6	Delusive offer of toleration .	25
Bishop King's projects against		Outline of the debate in the com-	
the Presbyterians . . . .	<i>ib.</i>	mons on the Test Act . . .	26
Especially in respect of the		Its effect on the Presbyterians .	27
Royal Bounty . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>	De Foe's pamphlet against it .	30
Patent for it renewed . . . .	10	Petition for its repeal . . .	31
Attempt to alter the mode of		Reception of the petition . .	33
its distribution . . . . .	11	Hostile resolutions of parliament	35
New presbyteries and sub-synods		M'Bride's vindication of Presby-	
formed . . . . .	12	terian marriages . . . .	37
Education of candidates for the		Answers by Lambert and Synge	38
ministry . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>	The synod establishes a mission-	
Subscription to the Confession of		ary fund . . . . .	39
Faith . . . . .	13	Return of the Whigs to power .	41
Emlyn's case . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>	Earl of Pembroke appointed	
Ascendency of the Tories under		lord-lieutenant . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Queen Anne . . . . .	14	Favours the repeal of the Test .	<i>ib.</i>
Abjuration Oath extended to Ire-		Parliament still oppose it . .	42
land . . . . .	15	Their resolutions against the	
Non-jurors . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>	Presbyterian burgesses of Bel-	
Irish parliament meet . . . .	17	fast . . . . .	44
Their resolutions in reference to		Fruitless efforts to obtain a re-	
the Royal Bounty . . . .	18	peal of the Test in England .	47

	PAGE		PAGE
Earl of Wharton appointed lord-lieutenant . . . .	47	repeal or modification of the Test . . . . .	50
Dean Swift's first pamphlet in support of the Test . . . .	48	Still resisted by both houses of parliament . . . . .	51
Tisdall's pamphlet against the Presbyterians . . . . .	49	His speech at the close of the session . . . . .	52
Lord Wharton recommends the			

## CHAPTER XXIII.

A.D. 1709-14.

Increase of congregations and ministers . . . . .	53	Tisdall's second pamphlet against the Presbyterians . . . .	77
Proposal to constitute the synod by delegation . . . . .	54	Revival of party spirit in the North, and especially in the county of Antrim . . . .	79
Case of Drogheda . . . . .	55	Case of the non-jurors . . . .	80
Rev. Mr. Fleming arrested there <i>ib.</i>		Tisdall's misrepresentations . .	81
Imprisonment of the Rev. Mr. Biggar . . . . .	56	His third pamphlet . . . . .	83
Proceedings against them quashed by the lord-lieutenant . . .	<i>ib.</i>	Case of Darragh of Monaghan <i>ib.</i>	
Controversy between Campbell and Gowan . . . . .	57	He turns informer against his brethren . . . . .	84
Preaching in the Irish language encouraged by the convocation .	60	Presbytery of Monaghan prosecuted for holding a meeting in Belturbet . . . . .	85
And by the synod . . . . .	62	M'Bride's pamphlet in reply to Tisdall . . . . .	88
The General Fund instituted in Dublin . . . . .	63	Proceedings of the synod in 1713 .	90
Change of ministry . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>	Kirkpatrick publishes his "Presbyterian Loyalty" . . . . .	92
Duke of Ormond appointed lord-lieutenant . . . . .	64	Renewed attacks on the non-juring ministers . . . . .	93
The Presbyterian non-jurors again troubled . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>	Duke of Shrewsbury succeeds Ormond as lord-lieutenant .	95
Mr. M'Cracken in London . . .	65	A new parliament meets . . . .	96
Irish parliament meet . . . . .	66	The House of Lords address the lord-lieut. against the non-jurors <i>ib.</i>	
Representation of the House of Lords against the Presbyterians	67	Mr. M'Cracken imprisoned in Carrickfergus . . . . .	97
Address of the convocation to the queen on the same subject	70	His trial . . . . .	99
Counter-addresses from the Presbyterians . . . . .	71	Tisdall's fourth pamphlet against the Presbyterians . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Case of the French refugees . .	76		



# CONTENTS.

xi

	PAGE		PAGE
Farther grievances . . .	100	Fresh outburst of High Church	
Synod in 1714 . . .	<i>ib.</i>	zeal . . . . .	103
The English Schism Bill ex-		Suddenly checked by the death	
tended to Ireland . . .	102	of the queen . . . . .	104

## CHAPTER XXIV.

A.D. 1714-19.

State of parties at the accession		Synod in 1716 approve thereof	127
of George I. . . . .	105	Their proceedings relative to the	
Presbyterians bring their claims		terms of a toleration . . .	<i>ib.</i>
before government . . .	108	Adhere to the Westminster Con-	
Meeting at Antrim . . .	<i>ib.</i>	fession of Faith . . . . .	128
Send commissioners to London	<i>ib.</i>	Resume preaching in the Irish	
Synod in 1715 . . . . .	110	language . . . . .	131
Violence of the High Church		Report thereon to the synod in	
party . . . . .	113	1717 . . . . .	133
Alarm respecting the Pretender	<i>ib.</i>	Two new presbyteries formed . .	<i>ib.</i>
Presbyterians agree to serve in		Renewed effort for the removal	
the militia . . . . .	114	of their grievances . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Parliament opened . . .	115	Another deputation sent to Lon-	
Bill in favour of the Presbyterians	116	don . . . . .	134
Tisdall's pamphlet against it . .	<i>ib.</i>	Their report to synod in 1718 . .	135
Progress of the Rebellion in		Augmentation of the Royal	
Scotland . . . . .	119	Bounty . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Precautionary measures in the		Proceedings of synod in 1719 on	
county of Antrim . . .	<i>ib.</i>	their Irish-preaching project . .	136
The Primate and the Bishop of		Government at length undertake	
Down and Connor complain to		to remedy the grievances of	
the government against the		the dissenters . . . . .	137
Presbyterians there . . .	120	Despatch of the lord-lieutenant	
Trial thereof at the assizes . .	<i>ib.</i>	to the secretary of state in	
Liberation of Mr. M'Cracken . .	121	London on this subject . . .	138
House of Lords oppose the bill		Parliament opened . . . . .	141
for relieving the Presbyterians	122	Allusion to the dissenters' claims	
Proceedings of government		in the speech from the throne . .	<i>ib.</i>
thereon . . . . .	123	Heads of a toleration bill intro-	
Bill abandoned . . . . .	125	duced into the commons . . .	143
Resolutions of the commons in		Progress of the bill . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
favour of Protestant dissenters	<i>ib.</i>	Debate in committee . . . . .	154
Presbyterian gentlemen resolve		Proceedings in the privy-coun-	
to continue in the militia . . .	126	cil . . . . .	145

	PAGE		PAGE
A counter bill on the basis of the		Debate thereon . . .	150
English Toleration Act carried		Division and protest there . .	151
through the lords . . .	147	Bishops who opposed and sup-	
The commons' bill as returned		ported the bill . . .	<i>ib.</i>
from England passes that		Character of the act . . .	152
house . . .	148	Temporary bill of indemnity	
Is carried up to the lords . .	149	passed . . .	153

## CHAPTER XXV.

A.D. 1719-26.

Religious state of the Church in		Synod of 1723 . . .	204
Ulster . . .	155	Its proceedings . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Formation of the Belfast Society	157	How treated in Belfast . . .	207
Its principles . . .	158	Publications for and against sub-	
Alarm excited thereby . . .	162	scription to the Confession . .	209
Policy of the Church . . .	165	First communion in the new	
Synod of 1720 . . .	166	Belfast congregation . . .	212
The Pacific Act . . .	171	State of feeling throughout the	
Violated at the installation of		Church . . .	213
Mr. Haliday at Belfast . .	173	Additional controversial pieces .	216
Measures consequent thereon .	174	Origin of Mr. Nevin's affair . .	217
Agitated state of the Church .	178	Synod of 1724 . . .	219
Synod of 1721 . . .	180	Trial of Mr. Nevin . . .	220
Declaration of belief in the Deity		Divisions in congregations . .	225
of Christ . . .	<i>ib.</i>	Publications by non-subscribers	227
Voluntary subscription of the		Disputes in the sub-synod of Bel-	
Westminster Confession . .	182	fast . . .	228
Publications connected with this		Farther non-subscribing writings	229
controversy . . .	187	Case of Colville of Dromore . .	230
Differences of opinion as to the		Synod of 1725 . . .	232
course to be pursued . . .	193	Its proceedings in Colville's case	233
Recommendation of ministers in		New arrangement of presbyteries	
Scotland . . .	194	in the Belfast sub-synod . .	234
Synod of 1722 . . .	196	Sequel of Colville's affair . .	236
Its peaceable results . . .	197	Additional publications . . .	238
New congregation in Belfast .	198	Overtures transmitted to pres-	
Collection in Glasgow for it .	199	byteries . . .	239
Opposed in the sub-synod of Bel-		Pamphlets connected with them	240
fast . . .	200	Other controversial works . .	241
Appeal of Colonel Upton, M.P.	201	Synod of 1726 . . .	243

# CONTENTS.

xiii

	PAGE		PAGE
Non-subscribers offer expedients for peace . . . .	243	The non-subscribing presbytery excluded . . . .	247
Overture rejecting these expedients . . . .	245	Extent of this exclusion . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Debate thereon . . . .	246	Its results . . . .	248

## CHAPTER XXVI.

A.D. 1726-36.

The non-subscribers permitted to retain their share of the Royal Bounty . . . .	250	proclamation of the new sovereign . . . .	260
Address their congregations . . . .	<i>ib.</i>	Favourable disposition of government . . . .	261
Secessions from their congregations . . . .	251	Emigration to America, and its causes . . . .	262
Conduct of Mr. Higinbotham . . . .	252	Mission of Mr. Craghead to London, and its results . . . .	264
Pamphlets relating to the separation . . . .	<i>ib.</i>	Renewed efforts for a repeal of the Sacramental Test defeated . . . .	267
Narrative of the Seven Synods . . . .	254	An act passed to free Presbyterians from persecution in the celebration of marriage . . . .	272
Mr. Hutcheson's tract . . . .	255	A new rule made by the synod relative to the election of ministers . . . .	273
Essay on Church power . . . .	256	Attempts to evade subscription to the Confession of Faith . . . .	274
Reply to the "Narrative of the Seven Synods" . . . .	257	Prospects of the Church . . . .	275
Passing of the Act of Toleration . . . .	258		
Remaining grievances . . . .	<i>ib.</i>		
Presbyterian marriages . . . .	259		
Accession of George II., and			

## CHAPTER XXVII.

A.D. 1736-50.

Rise of the Secession . . . .	276	Origin of the seceding congregation of Lylehill . . . .	282
Its popularity . . . .	277	Settlement of Osborne at Newtownlimavady . . . .	285
Application from Lisburn to the Associate Presbytery . . . .	278	Disputes in the presbytery of Armagh, and its division . . . .	286
Cherry's sermon before the sub-synod of Armagh . . . .	279	Case of Mr. Ferguson and the people of Markethill . . . .	288
Case of Aprichard, a licentiate who scruples subscription . . . .	280	Carlisle's synodical sermon . . . .	290
Case of Moody of Newry . . . .	282		

	PAGE		PAGE
Ordination of Patten at Lylehill	293	Increase of seceding congregations	307
Application from Markethill to the Associate Synod	294	The minister of Ray removes to Belfast, and secession begins at Ray	308
Fisher of Glasgow visits Ulster, and confers with Allen of Dromore and King of Dromara	295	Origin of the seceding congregations of Ballyrone, Newtownlimavady, and Ballibay	310
Supplications to the General Synod from various congregations	296	General Synod refuses to treat of communion with non-subscribers	311
Publication of a "Serious Warning"	298	Daniel Galey accuses a licentiate of heterodoxy	312
Division of the Seceders into Burghers and Antiburghers	302	Black installed at Boardmills, Mayn ordained at Ballyrone, and Arrott at Markethill	314
Controversy between Seceders and ministers of the General Synod	303	Pamphlets against the Seceders	<i>ib.</i>
Public discussion at Ballyrashane	306		

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

A.D. 1750-70.

Acts of Indemnity passed	316	His controversial publications, his ministerial usefulness, and his imprisonment	345
Increase in the number of congregations	317	Failure of a proposal to have the synod constituted of delegates from the several presbyteries	349
Efforts for an augmentation of the Royal Bounty	319	Overture for renewal of intercourse with the non-subscribers	350
Establishment of the Widows' Fund	323	Account of Dr. Leland	351
The Antrim presbytery invited to join in the scheme	326	Representatives from the Antrim presbytery appear in the General Synod	353
Progress of New-Light doctrines	<i>ib.</i>	Address to King George III.	354
Promoted by Scottish professors	327	Slow progress of the secession	355
Account of Dr. Hutcheson and Dr. Leechman	<i>ib.</i>	Applications to the synod from North America	356
State of the Established Church of Ireland	335	Sermon preached before the synod by the Rev. Gilbert Kennedy	358
Bishop Clayton an Arian	336	Case of the Rev. John Nelson and the congregation of Ballykelly	359
The law of subscription neglected	339		
Settlement of seceding ministers and erection of seceding congregations	<i>ib.</i>		
Account of the Rev. Thomas Clark of Ballibay	344		



# CONTENTS.

XV

	PAGE		PAGE
Correspondence with the non-subscribers . . . . .	361	The Rev. John Cameron joins the synod of Ulster, and embraces various errors . . .	362
Covenanting ministers appear in Ulster . . . . .	362	Declining state of religion . .	363

## CHAPTER XXIX.

A.D. 1770-93.

Discouraging situation of the Church, and symptoms of its decline . . . . .	365	His partial success : . . . .	386
Subscription to the Confession of Faith attacked by Cameron and defended by M'Dowel . .	367	Endowment of Seceders . . . .	387
Case of Mr. Stephenson, a licensee, and erection of the presbytery of Belfast . . . . .	369	Burghers and Antiburghers endeavour to effect a union, but their attempts unsuccessful . .	388
Agrarian disturbances, and death of Mr. Morell . . . . .	370	Controversy between the Bishop of Cloyne and Dr. Campbell . .	389
Emigration to America . . . .	371	Discussion between Messrs. Rogers and M'Garraugh . . . .	395
Political changes . . . . .	372	Mr. Black appointed agent for the synod of Ulster . . . . .	397
Rise of the volunteers . . . .	373	Another augmentation of Royal Bounty . . . . .	399
Alarm of government . . . . .	374	Prevalence of anti-evangelical doctrine . . . . .	400
Repeal of the Test Act . . . .	375	Resolutions respecting subscription to the Confession of Faith . .	401
Increasing influence of the volunteers . . . . .	376	Low state of ministerial education . . . . .	402
The Marriage Act, and the Act for the Relief of the Seceders . .	378	Attempts to establish collegiate seminaries . . . . .	403
Proposed increase of the Royal Bounty . . . . .	380	Slow progress of Church extension . . . . .	404
General election of 1783, and Dungannon meeting of volunteers . . . . .	381	Prevalence of a secular spirit . .	405
Dr. Campbell appointed to apply for an augmentation of the Royal Bounty . . . . .	384	Cases of Sabbath desecration . .	406
		Seceding communions . . . . .	408
		State of the Episcopal Church . .	<i>ib.</i>

## CHAPTER XXX.

A.D. 1793-1818.

State of public feeling in Ireland . .	411	Proposed establishment of a Presbyterian college at Cookstown . . . . .	414
Appointment of Earl Fitzwilliam as lord-lieutenant . . . . .	412		

	PAGE		PAGE
Sudden recal of Earl Fitzwilliam, and failure of the scheme . . . . .	414	Secessions of associate minis- ters . . . . .	448
Public discontent, and low state of public morals . . . . .	415	Notice of the Rev. Alexander Carson of Tobermore . . . . .	449
Real authors of the Rebellion of 1798 . . . . .	416	Increase of the Secession Church, and augmentation of its Regium Donum . . . . .	450
Loyalty of the synod of Ulster . . . . .	418	Opposition to classification in Burgher and Antiburgher synods . . . . .	451
Speech of the Rev. Robert Black of Derry . . . . .	419	Secession of the Rev. Jas. Bryce . . . . .	452
Notices of Dr. Bruce of Belfast, and of Dr. M'Dowel of Dublin . . . . .	421	Progress of the Covenanters . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Extent to which Presbyterians were involved in the Rebellion . . . . .	423	Gradual revival of religion in the synod of Ulster . . . . .	453
Proceedings of the synod of Ulster consequent upon it . . . . .	427	Case of the minister of Ballee, and protest against Unitarianism . . . . .	454
Notice of Dr. Wm. Steel Dickson . . . . .	429	Speech of the Rev. Dr. Waugh of London before the synod of Ulster . . . . .	455
Proposal of a union between Great Britain and Ireland . . . . .	431	Establishment of the Belfast Academical Institution . . . . .	456
Inducements held out at this time to the Presbyterians . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>	The Rev. Samuel Edgar, pro- fessor of divinity for the Burgher synod, lectures in it . . . . .	458
Proposed augmentation of Re- gium Donum, and scheme of classification . . . . .	432	The synod of Ulster recognises its certificates, and proposes to appoint a professor of divinity . . . . .	459
Opposition to classification . . . . .	434	Opposition of Dr. Black . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Motives of government and of Lord Castlereagh . . . . .	436	Message from Lord Castlereagh . . . . .	460
Terms on which the bounty was at length given . . . . .	441	Remarkable speech of Rev. Jas. Carlile . . . . .	462
Beneficial effects of the augmen- tation of the bounty . . . . .	444	The Rev. S. Hanna appointed professor of divinity . . . . .	464
Symptoms of religious improve- ment . . . . .	446	Death of Dr. Black . . . . .	465
Establishment of the Evangeli- cal Society of Ulster . . . . .	447		

## CHAPTER XXXI.

A.D. 1818-41.

Union of the Burgher and Anti- burgher synods . . . . .	466	cession Synod and of the Synod of Ulster . . . . .	467
Missionary operations of the Sc-		Intercommunion of synod of Munster,	

# CONTENTS.

xvii

	PAGE		PAGE
presbytery of Antrim, and synod of Ulster . . . .	469	fessor of moral philosophy in Belfast Institution . . . .	484
Preparation and publication of a code of discipline by synod of Ulster . . . . .	470	Synod of Lurgan, and attack of Mr. Montgomery on Mr. Cooke .	<i>ib.</i>
Its provisions . . . . .	472	The Unitarians resolve to with- draw from the synod, and as- sume the designation of Re- monstrants . . . . .	487
Rev. H. Cooke removes from Donegore to Killileagh . . .	473	Review of the Arian controversy	488
Captain Rowan one of his elders	<i>ib.</i>	Popularity of Dr. Cooke . . .	491
Mission of Mr. Smithurst, a Uni- tarian, from England . . . .	474	Happy results of the Unitarian secession . . . . .	492
Mr. Cooke complains of the elec- tion of Mr. Bruce as professor of Greek in the Belfast Insti- tution . . . . .	475	The Rev. J. S. Reid elected clerk of the synod of Ulster .	<i>ib.</i>
Dr. Bruce publishes his sermons and Mr. Paul his "Refutation of Arianism" . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>	Establishment of Fisherwick Place congregation, Belfast, and labours of Rev. James Morgan . . . . .	495
Mr. Cooke chosen moderator of the General Synod . . . .	476	Controversy respecting the na- tional system of education . .	496
His evidence before the Commis- sioners of Education Inquiry	<i>ib.</i>	Adoption of unqualified subscrip- tion to the Westminster Con- fession . . . . .	502
Evidence of Rev. William Porter	477	Renewal of intercourse with the Established Church of Scot- land . . . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Synod of Strabane, and its decla- ration of belief in the doctrine of the Trinity . . . . .	478	Equalisation of the Regium Do- num . . . . .	503
Speech of Rev. H. Montgomery	<i>ib.</i>	Efforts to promote a union be- tween the Secession Synod and the Synod of Ulster . . . .	504
Review of it by Mr. Paul . . .	479	Consummation of the union . .	506
Synod of Cookstown adopts reso- lutions against Arianism, and establishes a theological exa- mination committee . . . .	480	Concluding observations . . .	508
Speech of Rev. R. Stewart . .	482		
Election of Mr. Ferrie as pro-			

## CONTENTS OF APPENDIX TO VOLUME THIRD.

	PAGE
I. Protest against the overture for constituting the synod of Ulster by delegation . . . . .	519
II. Papers relative to the case of the Rev. William Biggar and Drogheda . . . . .	524
III. Notices of the families of Cowan and Stewart . . . . .	531
IV. List of the ministers of the Synod of Ulster and Presbytery of Antrim in 1799, with the stipend of each congregation	535
<hr style="width: 20%; margin: 10px auto;"/>	
INDEX . . . . .	541



# HISTORY

## OF THE

### PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND.

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#### CHAPTER XXII.

A.D. 1701-1709.

*Increasing troubles of the Presbyterians on account of their marriages—Memorial to the Lord-Lieutenant—Embarrassment of government thereon—Death of King William—Bishop King's projects against the Presbyterians—Especially in respect of the Royal Bounty—Patent for it renewed—Attempt to alter the mode of its distribution—New presbyteries and sub-synods formed—Education of candidates for the ministry—Subscription to the Confession of Faith—Embryn's case—Ascendency of the Tories under Queen Anne—Abjuration Oath extended to Ireland—Non-jurors—Irish Parliament meet—Their resolutions in reference to the Royal Bounty—The Sacramental Test—Originated in England—Introduced into the Irish Act by the Queen in Council—Its reception in Ireland—Sir Theobald Butler's speech—Delusive offer of toleration—Outline of the debate in the Commons on the Test Act—Its effect on the Presbyterians—De Foe's pamphlet against it—Petition for its repeal—Reception of the petition—Hostile resolutions of Parliament—M'Bride's vindication of Presbyterian marriages—Answers by Lambert and Syngc—the Synod establishes a missionary fund—Return of the Whigs to power—Earl of Pembroke appointed Lord-Lieutenant—Favours the repeal of the Test—Parliament still oppose it—Their resolutions against the Presbyterian Burgesses of Belfast—Fruitless efforts to obtain a repeal of the Test in England—Earl of Wharton appointed Lord-Lieutenant—Dean Swift's first pamphlet in support of the Test—Tisdall's pamphlet against the Presbyterians—Lord Wharton recommends the repeal or modification of the Test—Still resisted by both houses of parliament—His speech at the close of the session.*

THE general committee of the synod, which drew up the foregoing address to the lord-lieutenant, had been assembled at Belfast to take into consideration, among other matters, the increasing troubles to which the Presbyterian body were now subjected, on account of their continuing to celebrate marriages. They drew up a number of resolutions for the guidance of the Church at this conjuncture, which they forwarded to the different presbyteries for their opinion. Among these were the following res-

commendations :—"That all ministers continue as formerly to marry such as call them thereunto, the purpose of marriage being thrice published beforehand.—That in case any ministers be cited to the official court, they appear by their proctor, and demand a copy of their libel.—That some counsellor, learned in the law, be consulted whether our assisting at our people's marriages be contrary to law, and what is the most proper method for us to defend ourselves."<sup>1</sup> These resolutions indicate the difficulties with which they were now beset on this point. At a subsequent meeting, it was resolved to bring the whole subject before the notice of the new lord-lieutenant, and entreat the interposition of the government to stop these harsh proceedings. They embodied their case in a memorial, which was laid before his excellency in the beginning of October, and which, as it has never been printed, and supplies important information, to which the recent discussions on the same subject impart additional interest, may be inserted in full.<sup>2</sup> It commences thus :—

"That whereas his sacred majesty and royal consort of ever-blessed memory, from their princely clemency and pious affection to their peaceable and loyal subjects, were pleased to grant your petitioners full assurance of their protection in the free exercise of our religion, which has not only been repeated since by his majesty, but faithfully performed and continued by all in chief authority under him in this kingdom, your excellency also being pleased of late to strengthen our hopes of its continuance. And, tho' we are not conscious to ourselves of forfeiting the favour allowed us, we are surprised to find some officials in this part of the kingdom endeavouring to deprive us of what we have so long

<sup>1</sup> MS. Minutes of the Presbytery of Antrim.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from the Wodrow MSS. in the Advocates' library ; Jac. v. 1, 27, folio, vol. li., No. 48, p. 63. No date is given, nor does the name of the lord-lieutenant appear in the document ; but there can be no doubt it was presented at this time to the Earl of Rochester. The discussions on this subject, which issued in the Irish Marriage Act of 1844, have induced me to preserve this early testimony of our fathers to these facts—that they had celebrated marriage from their first settlement in Ireland, and that the validity of these marriages had never been questioned in the civil courts.

peaceably enjoyed; as appears by their pursuing both ministers and people in their courts for their nonconformity to the rules and ceremonies of the Church—ministers for solemnising marriage clandestinely as they please to call it, and making void such marriages by obliging persons so married publickly to confess themselves guilty of the damnable sin of fornication, to the no small grief of your petitioners who are hereby made infamous, their children incapable of succeeding to their effects, and of divers other privileges as being bastards: All which we are persuaded is done without the knowledge or consent of the government. Wherefore we, being necessitated to fly for refuge to your excellency, humbly beg your patient consideration of these few things.

“1. Your petitioners having been a considerable body of Protestant subjects in this kingdom now about eighty years, who, tho’ dissenting from the Established Church in some things, yet in all revolutions continued loyal and peaceable, suffering for our loyalty in the time of usurpation to that degree that King Charles II. observed it, protected your petitioners, and gave the ministers a royal pension: And we cannot think our late active zeal for the preservation of this kingdom can be forgotten by those who found our assistance so heartily granted and useful. 2. As the Established Church doth, so we profess marriage to be a holy ordinance of God, and an honourable state by Christians religiously and publickly to be entered into, with pious exhortation and prayer suitable to the occasion by a minister of the Word. Wherefore it hath been and is our ordinary practice, and through God’s assistance our resolution so to do when thereto called; not being free in conscience to conform to what the service-book requires in this matter, whereof we are willing and ready to give our reasons when required. 3. As no minister of our profession hath till now of late ever been troubled on such account, so the civil magistrate hath never made void such marriage, or denied to your petitioners the privileges proper to lawful marriage. 4. All official courts have hitherto granted administrations, probate of wills, &c., to the widows and children of such marriages, as

they did to others in the like case: the parish minister also constantly receiving his accustomed dues, as if they were married by himself; whereby we believe they have judged such marriages lawful, else we do not understand how they could demand so much money as they have received for many years from your petitioners.

“Wherefore may it please your excellency to consider how grievous it may be to a great part of his majesty’s subjects, if all marriages not solemnised according to the rules of the Established Church should be declared void, and their children thereby bastardised; seeing hereby not only Presbyterians, Papists, and Quakers, must be great sufferers, but also many of the conforming clergy and laity descended from parents so married, of whom we are well assured there be several in this kingdom. Nor can it escape your wise consideration how unseasonable at this time it is to move such debates, which cannot but create animosities and disunite the affections of Protestants, when not only the consciences of some but the reputation and civil interest of many must be deeply engaged. We hope therefore God will direct your excellency to put a speedy stop to such proceedings as are not only a present grievance, but may prove of evil consequence to our posterity.”

The lord-lieutenant appears to have been so embarrassed by the proceedings against the Presbyterians, as detailed in this petition, that he immediately wrote to London for instructions how to act, and stated his determination to observe, in the meantime, the utmost prudence and caution. Mr. Vernon, the secretary of state, was unable, in the absence of the king in Holland, to furnish him with the necessary directions. He consulted the Archbishop of Canterbury on the subject, but he, too, was unprepared to give an opinion, viewing it “as a matter of weight that may have great consequence either way.” Mr. Vernon also called to his aid the Bishop of Clogher, then in London; and, as was to be expected, he appears to have defended the proceedings against the Presbyterian marriages, assuring the secretary of his having heard, from one of the primate’s officials, that the prosecutions in the bishops’ courts had produced “this good



effect already, that some of the Presbyterian ministers had appeared, and submitted themselves to the jurisdiction of these courts; and having promised they would forbear for the future this practice of marrying, they were discharged." Mr. Vernon not only distrusted this piece of news, but lamented these harsh proceedings against the Presbyterians. "I cannot but think it very unfortunate," he writes to the lord-lieutenant, "if in our present circumstances people of any profession should come to extremities one with another. I am very confident his majesty will approve of your excellency's resolution to proceed in this matter with great caution. When he comes to England I shall desire to know his pleasure as to what he would have signified to your excellency about it."<sup>3</sup> When the subject was brought under the notice of King William, his majesty, as was to be expected, disapproved of the proceedings against the Presbyterians, and expressed a wish that some expedient might be found for putting a stop to these prosecutions, without interfering with the rights of the Established Church.<sup>4</sup> Whether the lord-lieutenant made any effort to comply with the wish of the king does not appear.<sup>5</sup> He soon after returned to England, entrusting the government to the same lords-justices that had been employed before his arrival, with the addition of two others, who were sworn into office in the end of the year 1701, and who, with an archbishop at their head, were not likely to do anything to befriend the Presbyterians. And, in fact, the prosecutions in the bishops' courts against marriages continued to multiply to such a degree, that the synod was compelled, in less than half a year, to renew

<sup>3</sup> Singer's "Correspondence of Henry, Earl of Clarendon, and of the Earl of Rochester." Lond. 1828, 4to, vol. ii. p. 404.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, vol. ii. p. 421.

<sup>5</sup> Bishop Burnet, in his "History of his Own Time," says of Lord Rochester, while in Ireland at this time, that "he used much art in obliging people of all sorts, dissenters as well as Papists;" but that, notwithstanding, "such confidence was put in him by the High Church party, that they bore everything at his hands;" Oxford edit., 1823, vol. iv. p. 524. It might be inferred from this passage, that the lord-lieutenant had done something to favour the Presbyterians, but I can discover no trace of any such proceeding on his part.

their complaints to the Irish government, but with diminished hopes of redress. For their great protector, King William, died in the month of March 1701. No heavier blow could have fallen upon the cause of toleration, and the interests of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, than the death of this truly great man. By no party in Ireland was his loss more sincerely deplored than by the Presbyterians. Though the paramount influence of an intolerant faction defeated most of his plans in their favour, yet his very name was felt to be a tower of strength on their side, of which their opponents now rejoiced to see them deprived.

In proportion as the Presbyterians were grieved for the death of the king, the High Church party were filled with hopes that the time had now at length arrived, when they would be able to tread under foot the dissenters, by not only depriving them of their right to hold office, by means of a Test Act, but by withholding that legal toleration which they professed themselves so ready to grant, the moment such an act were passed. This was a crisis, of which their vigilant and jealous foe, Bishop King of Derry, was sure to avail himself, in order to push forward his schemes against them. He had scarcely heard of the king's death when he wrote to the Bishop of Clogher, who was still in London, urging him to move the government, either to withdraw altogether the grant of Royal Bounty, which he alleged had been abused, for the purpose of erecting new congregations where they were not required; or, if continued, to place it on such a footing as might render the ministers subservient to the government, and might introduce, at the same time, divisions among them. The bishop's proposal was, "The government ought to keep the disposal of the fund in their own hands, and encourage those only by it that comply as they would have them. By which means every particular minister would be at their mercy; and it might be so managed as to be an instrument of division and jealousy amongst them." So anxious was he for the adoption of this mean and disgraceful plan for weakening the Presbyterian cause, that a few days afterwards he pressed it on the notice of Sir Robert Southwell, the secretary for Ireland, in a letter which is too

characteristic and instructive to be withheld. He thus wrote in the end of March 1702 :—

“As to the dissenters of Ireland, they seem to be in great fear, and nothing could show more clearly the interest they thought themselves to have in his late majesty’s favour, than the dejection that appears amongst them at present. I believe good use might be made of this if rightly managed ; and that right methods now used might bring in many of them. I find that they are now in most places come to that pass, that they do not plead conscience for their nonconformity ; but say they can’t do it [*i.e.*, conform to the Episcopal Church] safely, their dependence being on that party who are able to ruin them if they do not stick to them. The acts by which they keep up their party are, to take no apprentices that will not engage to go to the meeting with them ; to employ none nor trade with any that are not of their own sort, if they can help it ; to plant their land with such ; and on all juries and other occasions to favour such more than justice. In all those they have been supported and countenanced, and he was looked on as disaffected to the government that formerly complained of them.—You may remember that they had £1200 per annum settled on them out of the treasury. Some of the most eminent of their ministers were trustees for it, which created a sort of dependence of the press [*rest ?*] upon them, and enabled them to manage their affairs by joint councils ; for these [trustees] were a general committee and centre of unity for their whole body. They employed this money to settle meetings through the whole kingdom ; and by this they maintained their emissaries, till they had seduced enough to support their teachers ; by this means the most busy factious persons had the best shares. But I hope this will fail them for the future ; or, if it be continued, it will be put in good hands that will give it [*to*] the most humble, peaceable and complying ; and some good use may be made of such contrivance if it must be continued.—I may tell you their insolence has much increased. They have insulted both the clergy and laity, and made our ecclesiastical offices more and more [*despised ?*] every day : particularly assuming to themselves the privileges of cele-

brating marriages. Nay, there is one instance very remarkable of their confidence. A clergyman had purchased a lease on which there was a meeting-house ; he refused to let them enjoy it gratis ; on which they came in a body, broke it open, preached in it, and then pulled it down and carried away the materials. The clergyman brought a constable and a justice of the peace's warrant to quiet the riot. But they slighted both, and when examinations were taken against them, they puffed the justices of the peace that took them, and gave out that they cared not what they did against them, for they had employed their agent in England to obtain from his majesty an order to stop proceedings. We hope that such actions as these will not be countenanced ; for though, I believe, they were not approved before, yet they believed they were, which had much the same effect."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> King's MS. Correspondence. It is not a little curious to observe how every piece of scandal to the discredit of Presbyterians found its way to the ears of Bishop King, no matter where it occurred. The incident to which he refers in the above letter, of the pulling down of a meeting-house, took place at Cookstown, in the diocese of Armagh, in the middle of the previous October. The following is a correct version of this affair, as recorded at the time, by William Stewart, Esq., of Killymoon, the magistrate alluded to by the bishop as having granted the warrant to quiet the alleged riot. It appears that the meeting-house in question had been built by the congregation, under the Rev. John Mackenzie, soon after the Revolution, partly on commonable land, and partly on a piece of ground recently taken off the common without authority, by a tenant of the above Mr. Stewart. This person, in 1695, surrendered his holding, and Mr. Stewart let it to one Logan ; and, in his account of this affair, he declares that, in his lease to Logan, he never intended to include any right to the ground on which the meeting-house stood, which he considered as part of the common, and for which the Presbyterians had never been asked for any rent by either of his two tenants. In the year 1701, the Rev. John Richardson, then rector of the parish, and a very violent High-Churchman, as appears by letters of his which I have seen, bought Logan's interest in the lease, evidently for the purpose of getting rid of this obnoxious conventicle. Having got possession of Logan's holding, he claimed the house and ground as his ; and if we are to credit Bishop King, for Mr. Stewart does not mention the fact, he had laid a rent on the house, which it is probable the congregation had refused to pay. Accordingly, selecting, with malicious perversity, a week-day, on which there was Divine service in the house, he closed up the doors, and prevented all ingress. When the people assembled for worship, they very



The wretched spirit of jealousy and intolerance displayed in this letter now began to exhibit itself more openly against the Presbyterians, and continued steadily to increase among the clergy during the whole of Queen Anne's reign. In the meantime, the former prosecutions against their marriages, so far from being checked, were encouraged, while indications appeared of a design to suspend the payment of the Royal Bounty grant. On both these matters the synod of this year, 1702, were compelled once more to lay their complaints before the lord-lieutenant. But no redress was to be expected, when the advisers of the government were two bishops, and, one of these, King of Derry. These prelates, when consulted "about the complaint by the Presbyterians in the North of a fresh prosecution against their ministers on account of their marriages," took upon them to assure the lords-justices, that so far from that complaint being well-founded, those prosecutions had been less vigorous since the king's death than previously, "because the bishops would not

naturally felt indignant at this summary eviction out of their own property ; and breaking open a passage through the side-wall, they entered, and having held their worship as usual, they immediately proceeded to unroof the house, which would be only thatched, and were removing the materials for the purpose of erecting it elsewhere, when the rector obtained a warrant from Mr. Stewart to apprehend the people as rioters, which was granted, and about twenty of them were afterwards bound over by the bench of magistrates to be tried for the riot at the next assizes. On the same day, Mr. Stewart examined the place, and declares that, according to the evidence of some of the oldest inhabitants there, who pointed out the mearings, the meeting-house was manifestly built altogether on the common. I am indebted to the kindness of the late Colonel Stewart of Killymoon for a perusal of the original memorandum relative to this matter by his ancestor, who died in 1705, and who concludes it thus—"The great noise of this affair, and various reports of it, made me think fit to give this account thereof ; leaving to the judgment of the more understanding if the taking down and removing the house in manner as aforesaid will amount to a riot." I have not been able to ascertain the issue of the trial of these alleged rioters. The widow of Mr. Stewart, who was a daughter of Mr. Shaw of Ballygelly, in the county of Antrim, and a decided Presbyterian, had the meeting-house rebuilt in the Killymoon demesne, out of reach of the intolerant rector, where it continued till the year 1764.

give the dissenters occasion to believe the expectations they [the bishops] had from her majesty's favour to the Church induced them to be more severe than otherwise they would be to these people." But they added, that such prosecutions were absolutely necessary, lest the Presbyterians "should be encouraged to make further encroachments on the Church, and their own clergy be too much discouraged by it."<sup>7</sup> With regard to the Royal Bounty grant, the synod had also complained of its payment being suspended; but the lords-justices, in the beginning of July, reported to his excellency in England that this complaint was unfounded, though the only evidence they had was, not the production of the proper vouchers, but the bare assertion of a subordinate official in the treasury, afterwards proved to be unworthy of credit, who assured them, that out of three quarters' salary then payable, the ministers had received two quarters; which, if paid at all, had probably been remitted after the complaint had been laid before the lord-lieutenant in the beginning of the previous month.<sup>8</sup> The government found it would be inexpedient to suspend this grant at the present conjuncture. The last patent had been made void by the death of King William, and Queen Anne was advised to issue a new one as formerly. Her letter or warrant, addressed to the Irish government, was dated in the month of December after her accession, and in the following March, letters patent were issued, under the great seal of Ireland, constituting thirteen ministers trustees for the distribution of the grant.<sup>9</sup> But though the Royal Bounty was thus con-

<sup>7</sup> Singer's "Correspondence of Clarendon and Rochester," vol. ii. p. 447, 448.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 449. This under officer in the treasury was one Thomas Putland, who, five years afterwards, was convicted by the House of Commons of having "notoriously betrayed the trust reposed in him," and declared "unfit to serve in any public employment." Journals of Irish Commons, vol. iii. p. 494.

<sup>9</sup> This *third* set of trustees consisted of the Rev. Messrs. Craghead and Hutchison, the only survivors of the *first* trustees; the Rev. Messrs. Bruce, Iredell, M'Bride, Malcome, and Hutchinson, of the *second* set, (see page 7 of this volume), with the following new trustees, the Rev. Andrew Ferguson, minister of Burt, the Rev. William Holmes of Strabane, the Rev. John Stirling

tinued, it appears that Bishop King's ungenerous suggestion to change the mode of its distribution, in order to render its recipients more directly dependent on the government, was not forgotten. The power of allocating the amount among the ministers was now withdrawn from the trustees, and transferred to the lord-lieutenant, who was empowered to distribute it in such portions, and to such ministers, as he pleased. The Rev. Mr. Iredell, who had been commissioned to correspond with friends in London on this matter, produced to the synod "a letter from the Rev. Daniel Williams of London, showing that the Royal Bounty is secured, though to be distributed after another manner;" and he added, he had written to Mr. Williams, who had heard that the grant had been paid in unequal portions, to assure him that it had always been equally divided by the trustees among their brethren.<sup>10</sup> The grant was accordingly no longer entered on the Irish establishment in this form, "To Presbyterian ministers," as it had appeared during the previous reign. It henceforth stood thus:—"To be distributed among such of the nonconforming ministers, by warrant from the lord-lieutenant or other chief governor or governors for the time being, in such manner as he or they shall find necessary for our service or the good of that kingdom."<sup>11</sup> There is no reason to believe, however, that any real change in its mode of distribution took place, or that any attempt was made to interfere with the independence of individual ministers by means of this alteration. It appears to have been distributed in equal portions to all the ministers as before this change; the government declining the

of Ballykelly, the Rev. Robert Haltridgo of Finvoy, the Rev. Thomas Orr of Comber, and the Rev. James Kirkpatrick of Templepatrick, and afterwards of Belfast.

<sup>10</sup> To corroborate Mr. Iredell's statement, I find that there was sent over to Mr. Williams, to be laid before the government, the affidavit of Mr. Thomas Crawford, sworn before one John Humphrey, a public notary in Belfast, in August 1703, stating that, since the first grant of the Royal Bounty by King William, he had been agent for its distribution, and that he had uniformly divided it, share and share alike, among the ministers. State Paper Office, London.

<sup>11</sup> *Liber Hibernicæ.*

invidious responsibility which was sought to be imposed on it for the base and sinister purposes suggested by Bishop King.

Meanwhile, the Presbyterian cause continued to prosper, and the number of ministers and congregations was steadily increasing. Some of the presbyteries had now grown too large for the proper discharge of their duties; and it became necessary to reduce the number of members in each by the formation of new presbyteries, in order to secure a more efficient oversight of the various departments of the Church. Accordingly, the synod, in this year, constituted two new presbyteries out of the overgrown presbytery of Tyrone, and one out of that of the Lagan; at the same time, an additional sub-synod was formed, and appointed to meet statedly at Monaghan, so that there were now nine presbyteries, distributed into three sub-synods, the superintendence of the whole being under one general synod, which continued to meet annually at Antrim in the first week of June.<sup>12</sup> There were still great difficulties in obtaining an adequate supply of ministers for the increasing number of congregations. The Church, however, never relaxed her efforts to secure the services of pious and educated men. To prevent any candidates being admitted to the ministry, save those who were sound in the faith, the synod, in 1698, had enacted, in conformity with the law of the Established Church of Scotland, that no young man should be licensed to preach the Gospel, unless "he subscribe the Confession of Faith in all the articles thereof, as the confession of his faith." But it was not deemed sufficient to have provided for the orthodoxy of ministers—efforts were now also made to elevate the standard of their professional education. The synod in this year resolved not to enter any one on trials for license to preach, unless he had studied divinity for no less than four years after having completed his course of philosophy.<sup>13</sup> By these means the ministry of the Presbyterian

<sup>12</sup> The names of the presbyteries at this period were, Down, Belfast, Antrim, Coleraine, Armagh, Tyrone, sometimes called Cookstown, Monaghan, or Stonebridge, Derry, and Convoy. The sub-synods were now styled, Belfast, Monaghan and Lagan.

<sup>13</sup> It was afterwards resolved by the synod, in 1707, that all young men



Church became every year more and more respectable in literary and theological attainments. They were all sincerely attached to the system of Divine truth, as set forth in the standards of their own and their mother Church of Scotland, where most of them had received their education.<sup>14</sup> To these standards the fathers of the Church in Ulster had steadfastly adhered; and they had uniformly required, from those about to be ordained, either a verbal assent to them, or, as enacted a few years afterwards, a written, and subsequently a recorded subscription, to the Westminster Confession of Faith. No departure from the doctrines of this admirable confession had yet appeared among the ministers in Ulster, or elsewhere in Ireland; and when, in June of this year, the Rev. Thomas Embyn, one of the ministers

on trial for the ministry "should be able to interpret the Hebrew psalter, *ad aperturam libri*;" and, in 1709, the synod appropriated £10 per annum out of the general fund to the Rev. Fulk White, minister of Broughshane, in the county of Antrim, "to encourage him in teaching Hebrew." MS. Minutes of Synod.

<sup>14</sup> I find the names of very many ministers in Ulster in the matriculation-books of the university of Glasgow, from the Revolution downwards. Several also studied in the universities of St. Andrews and Edinburgh. The number of students from Ireland who frequented the university of Glasgow was very considerable. Thus, I may state, that in this year (1702), 43 Irish students matriculated, the total number of matriculations being 134. Many of these students were not designed for the Presbyterian Church, several of them were for the Episcopal Church, and many such continued to receive their education at Glasgow down to the close of this century. I have seen a private diary, kept by the Rev. Robert Gordon, who was minister of Rathfriland from 1711 to 1762, from which it appears that he studied theology in Edinburgh, where, in 1704, he paid "fourteenpence weekly for his chamber." The session closed in June. Mr. Gordon was a native of Donaghadee, and we learn that, in summer, public worship was usually held at eight o'clock, at ten o'clock, and in the afternoon, and in winter twice each Sabbath; there was also public worship regularly every Wednesday. On Sunday, July 2, 1704, he was at the administration of the Lord's Supper at Killileagh; the service began about seven o'clock in the morning: there were seven tables. The next Sabbath he was at the Cumber communion, where there were ten tables and a half; worship began at eight o'clock. I may add that this truly patriarchal minister, of above half a century's standing, was thrice married, and was the father of twenty-six children, comprising thirteen sons and thirteen daughters!



of Wood Street, in Dublin, was suspected of denying the deity of the Saviour, the other Presbyterian ministers of the metropolis were greatly alarmed at the prospect of so vital an error creeping in among their congregations. They instituted an inquiry into the matter, and Mr. Embyn having avowed himself an Arian, he was immediately deposed by them from the ministry, as "holding a doctrine which struck at the foundation of Christianity, and was of too dangerous a consequence to be tolerated among them."<sup>15</sup> In the spring of the following year, he published a defence of his doctrinal views; and for this work, which was fairly and temperately written, he was most unjustly indicted for blasphemy, but not at the suggestion of any of the ministers; he was tried in the Court of Queen's Bench, and found guilty, and suffered a cruel and unjustifiable imprisonment of above two years. In the North, no similar departure from the doctrines of the Gospel had occurred; ministers and people were firmly united in maintaining the same faith, and the Church in Ulster was enjoying a remarkable degree of prosperity just at this crisis, when political changes were preparing new trials for her members.

Queen Anne, immediately after her accession, placed herself under the guidance of the High Church Tories. That party now gained a complete ascendancy, and the baneful effects of the change were soon felt by the Irish Presbyterians. The Earl of Rochester, uncle to the queen, was continued in the office of lord-lieutenant, but he resided in England, and the government was administered by lords-justices. The first English parliament in this reign met in the end of this year, and, early in the following year, 1703, they passed a bill which, by a clause added to it in the House of Lords,<sup>16</sup> and afterwards adopted by the commons,<sup>17</sup> extended to Ireland, the provisions of an act of King

<sup>15</sup> "The Difference between Mr. Embyn and the Dissenting Ministers of Dublin, truly represented," quoted in Mathews' "Account of Embyn's Trial." Dub. 1839, 8vo, p. 17, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Journals of the English Lords, vol. xvii. p. 269; 4th Feb.

<sup>17</sup> Journals of the English Commons, vol. xiv. p. 194; 13th Feb. It received the royal assent on the 27th of February 1703.

William's last parliament,<sup>18</sup> by which all persons in office, civil, military, or ecclesiastical, were required to take the oath of abjuration. By this oath it was declared, that the person pretending formerly to be the Prince of Wales, and now to be King of England, by the title of James III., had no right or title whatsoever to the crown. By the first clause of the bill, the 1st of August following was declared to be the last day for taking this oath; and by the fourth clause, which extended the operation of the act to Ireland, it was enacted, by a solecism in legislation, that the oath should be taken by "all preachers and teachers of separate congregations," though such parties in Ireland had as yet no existence in the eye of the law, but were positively prohibited by statute, under severe penalties, from having any standing in the kingdom.<sup>19</sup> To carry out the provisions of this English statute, and to prepare for a new election, and the subsequent assembling of a parliament in Ireland, the queen was anxious that Lord Rochester should return to his government. But he positively refused to leave England; and in his room the Duke of Ormond was appointed lord-lieutenant, in the month of February. The oath of abjuration was almost universally taken by the Presbyterian ministers in Ireland. The only exceptions were the Rev. Mr. M'Bride of Belfast, the Rev. Alexander M'Cracken of Lisburn, the Rev. John Riddel of Glenavy, or Ballinderry, and the Rev. Thomas Stirling of Der-vock: the Rev. Gideon Jacque, and the Rev. Patrick Dunlop, formerly minister of Stonebridge, also joined with these ministers, but they did not at this period hold any pastoral charges in

<sup>18</sup> 13 & 14 Will. III., chap. 6.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Anne, stat. 2, chap. 21, in the authentic edition of the English statutes, published by the Record Commission in 1821; it is chap. 17 in the previous editions. The anomalous provision respecting Irish dissenting ministers had been inadvertently copied from King William's act, in which it was quite correct, for English dissenting ministers were duly recognised and protected by their Toleration Act, whereas in Ireland they were still beyond the pale of the law—a fact probably not known to the new advisers of her majesty. Irish Presbyterians have, down to very recent times, found English ministries, whether Whigs or Tories, very ignorant of their history and position in Ireland.

Ulster.<sup>20</sup> These non-jurors, as they were called, while they gave every assurance of their loyalty and allegiance to Queen Anne, and to the Protestant succession in the house of Hanover, scrupled to take the oath, for these, among other reasons—because they conceived it required them to swear that to be a fact of which they were not fully convinced, namely, that the Pretender was not the son of the late King James II.,<sup>21</sup> and because they conceived the terms of the oath bound them to conform to, or at least to protect and defend, the English Church. The High Church party eagerly seized on their refusal to brand them as Jacobites and disloyal, and to cast the same reproach on the Presbyterians generally, while many of their own friends lamented this unseasonable scrupulosity. Some unpleasant proceedings took place in the presbytery of Belfast, owing to certain observations which the Rev. Mr. Malcome of Dunmurry had made, on the refusal of his neighbour, the Rev. Mr. M'Cracken of Lisburn, to take the oath. This case was carried by appeal to the subsequent synod, who found both parties to be more or less culpable. At the same time, an overture or resolution was unanimously adopted by the synod, inculcating mutual forbearance, and exhorting ministers to avoid all personal reflections on one another, whether in public or in private, which might introduce divisions among them, and thus impair their influence as a body.

The non-juring ministers were in the first instance unmolested. Efforts were indeed made, without loss of time, to put the law in execution against them, but happily without effect. Mr. M'Bride of Belfast, who afterwards suffered so much for refusing to take the oath, has given the following account of these unsuccessful attempts:—"Although there was a warrant appointed by the lord-lieutenant to be written, and was also by the sub-secretary writ-

<sup>20</sup> Jacque was a member of the presbytery of Tyrone, but without a charge. See chapter xx., note 33, p. 18, and Wodrow's MS. Letters in the Advocates' library, Edinburgh, vol. vi., No. 59.

<sup>21</sup> The reader may see the reasons assigned by these brethren, or at least by one of them, for refusing the oath, in "The Wodrow Correspondence," vol. i. p. 158, &c.

ten to prosecute Mr. M'Cracken and me, yet a special friend of ours dissuaded the Duke of Ormond from signing it, by letting him know that it would be looked upon as very partial to spare all the Popish priests and some of their own clergy who are non-jurants, and only to pursue us: As also it would look ill if the government should prosecute us for transgressing an act made in England and not as yet ratified in Ireland, when there are standing laws in this kingdom on which they might pursue us all; and he wished that government would not begin to be prosecutors. These arguments prevailed with the Duke of Ormond so far that he would not sign the warrant; so it fell." Mr. M'Bride then adds:—"The next attempt was, that the judge at the assizes gave it in charge to the grand jury of the county of Antrim to present non-jurants. But this also failed; for tho' a considerable part of them were Episcopal, yet they would not present us. It was next reported with great confidence that the sheriff of the county had a special warrant to apprehend me. But I have found from himself that to be false, and have his assurance that if anything of that nature come to his hand, we shall have seasonable warning: Whereupon we continue in the exercise of our ministry as formerly."<sup>22</sup>

On the 21st of September, the Irish parliament met, and as the recent elections had thrown a preponderating majority into the hands of the High-Church party, they soon displayed their hostility to the Presbyterians. During the first month of the session, the House of Commons, in one or two instances, indicated

<sup>22</sup> Stirling's MS. Letters, Univ. Libr. Glasgow, vol. iv., No. 116. Another unsuccessful attempt was afterwards made to bring these non-jurors into trouble. Mr. M'Cracken of Lisburn says:—"Before the parliament rose [in November 1703], there was a letter sent to the speaker of the House of Commons acquainting him that there were some non-jurants, and desiring that there might be some course taken with them. I hear the writer named only Mr. M'Bride and me. This was read in the house, and gave occasion to some to speak upon it. But the overruling providence of God so ordered that some who were strangers to us, and not of our persuasion, appeared against it, and so nothing was done: One reason was, because they who had written the letter had not the confidence to put their name to it." Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. ii., No. 58.



but too clearly the spirit by which they were actuated. On the 19th of October, their committee on public accounts recommended that Mr. M'Bride and Mr. M'Cracken should be struck off the grant of Royal Bounty for refusing to take the oath of abjuration.<sup>23</sup> A few days afterwards, however, the house agreed to a resolution which would have altogether superseded this recommendation of their committee. They resolved—"That the pension of twelve hundred pounds per annum, granted to the Presbyterian ministers in Ulster, is an unnecessary branch of the establishment."<sup>24</sup> Thus one great object of the policy of Bishop King, who had been removed in the spring of this year from Derry to the archbishopric of Dublin, was accomplished, so far at least as a resolution of the House of Commons could avail; but, fortunately for the Presbyterian ministers, his efforts to deprive them of this grant proved in the end abortive. The government would not venture to carry out this vindictive measure; and, notwithstanding the adverse vote of the commons, the grant was continued as formerly on the fiscal establishment of the kingdom.<sup>25</sup> Nor, as already stated, is there any trace that the other suggestion of Bishop King, which had been formally adopted by the government, to alter the mode of distributing this grant, so as to sow jealousies among the ministers, was carried into effect, although,

<sup>23</sup> Journals of the Irish Commons, vol. iii. page 61. Mr. Riddel, being minister in a rural district, escaped notice for some time, while Mr. Stirling does not appear to have been molested at Dervock until the latter part of this reign. With regard to the latter minister, I may here mention the singular fact, that his father, two uncles, and two cousins, all of the name of Stirling, and one of whom was principal of Glasgow college for many years, were ministers of the Church of Scotland.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, vol. iii. page 76.

<sup>25</sup> Mr. M'Cracken, writing from Lisburn to the brother of Wodrow, the Scottish historian, on Dec. 3, 1703, says:—"The parliament hath taken from us that £1200 the queen granted and we enjoyed in King William's time. But it is thought by some the queen will continue it, which she may do notwithstanding of this vote in the house." Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. ii. No. 58. Mr. M'Bride, in a letter to Principal Stirling of Glasgow college, dated, Belfast, June 12, 1704, says:—"We are informed that the Duke of Ormond hath prevailed with the queen to continue our pension." Stirling's MS. Letters, vol. iv. No. 116.



from his new position as archbishop of Dublin, his influence with the government was greatly increased.

But while the ministers escaped these attempts to injure them in respect of the Royal Bounty, a much more serious grievance was preparing to be imposed on the entire Presbyterian population throughout the kingdom. This was one of the bitter fruits of that violent opposition to all dissenters, whether Protestants or Romanists, which burst forth after the accession of Queen Anne. The Roman Catholics were the first to feel the effects of the prevalent spirit. They had already suffered much, in direct violation of the treaty of Limerick; but it is from the commencement of this reign that that iniquitous series of anti-popery laws began, which have been the source of so much misery to Ireland, and the mischievous effects of which, though now happily repealed, are still to be traced in many of the social evils of that ill-governed land. Although these most unjust and oppressive laws were passed for the sake of the Established Church, yet the Presbyterians were so blinded by the headstrong and unreasoning anti-papal spirit of those days, as to concur but too cordially in their enactment. And it was a singular occurrence, an instance, perhaps, of righteous requital,<sup>26</sup> that they themselves, after having given their aid in parliament to carry one of the most cruel of these statutes against the Romanists, should, by a clause added to that very statute, be deprived of their own civil rights, and subjected in their turn to serious grievances on account of their religion. The act now referred to was framed by the House of Commons in the early part of their first session; and, in the form of "Heads of a bill to prevent the further growth of Popery," was sent to England, in the middle of November, for the consideration of the queen and her ministers. In this shape, in which it had received the support of the Presbyterian members, its provisions applied exclusively to the Romanists, and were most oppressive and unjustifiable. Early in February 1704, it was transmitted in due form to Dublin, under the great seal, in order to receive the

<sup>26</sup> " ——— Nec lex est æquior ulla,  
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua."—*Ovid*.

final sanction of parliament. In this form it was competent for the Irish legislature only to adopt or to reject a bill ; no material amendments or omissions could be made without a new transmission to England. When laid before parliament, the Presbyterians, to their great dismay, found that an entirely new clause had been introduced into it by the English ministry, requiring "all persons holding any office, civil or military, or receiving any pay or salary from the crown, or having command or place of trust from the sovereign," to take the sacrament in the Established Church within three months after every such appointment. In other words, the Sacramental Test, which it had been so long the object of the Irish bishops to impose upon the Presbyterians, was thus at length on the eve of being carried into effect. Should this unexpected provision be enacted, the Presbyterians would be summarily deprived of all the public offices and places of trust which they then held, and be rendered incapable of being ever afterwards appointed to similar offices.

Various conjectures have been formed to account for the introduction of this clause against the Presbyterians into a bill which they themselves had supported avowedly "to prevent the further growth of Popery." It has been alleged that it originated with Lords Rochester and Nottingham, who were opposed to the bill as sent over from Ireland, lest the Emperor of Germany should break off his alliance with England, because of the grievances which it imposed on his co-religionists, the Romanists of Ireland ; and that those noblemen, being afraid to oppose it openly in the face of the violent anti-popery spirit then raging, had recourse to the expedient of adding to it the Sacramental Test clauses, in order that it might encounter the opposition of the Presbyterians, who, it was calculated, when supported by the Irish Whigs, would be able to throw out the bill.<sup>27</sup> But this state-

<sup>27</sup> The only original authority I know of for this account of the motives of the English ministers is Burnet, in the "History of his Own Times," vol. v. pp. 102, 103, which has been followed by all subsequent historians, to whom it is unnecessary to refer. But we now know that comparatively little dependence is to be placed on his statements with regard to matters which, like the present case, either did not fall within his own immediate knowledge, or in-

ment is by no means probable. The Emperor of Germany was not at all likely to sympathise with the Irish Romanists, who were well known to be in the interest of France, his most formidable rival. The noblemen who introduced the clause were uniformly distinguished for their bitter hostility to both Romanists and dissenters. They could therefore have no motive for wishing to defeat the bill; and even if they had, they must have known, from the parallel case of the English Test Act in 1673, that the Presbyterians, so far from opposing the bill, were more likely to overlook their own grievances, in their zeal for protecting the Protestant religion against the Romanists, and to support the measure, even with the obnoxious clause. Lord Rochester and his colleagues must also have known that the Presbyterian party in the Irish parliament, especially since the last election, were too few to be able to defeat the bill, in the face of all the weight and influence with which the High Church party would hasten to support a measure so congenial to their feelings, and so long desired by them. This very parliament, too, had already given such unequivocal proofs of their hostility to the Presbyterians, as must have satisfied any statesman of ordinary discernment that they were fully prepared and able to pass the bill, even had it been more oppressive to that party.

All the evidence now extant, with regard to the introduction of this clause, which is unfortunately very scanty,<sup>28</sup> proves that it was a deliberately planned scheme of the High Church faction

involved party feelings. Calamy, in the "Historical Account of his Own Life," vol. ii. page 28, written at the time, merely says that it was commonly reported that Lords Nottingham and Rochester inserted the clause in the privy-council, after the bill had been sent over from Ireland, all which was quite true; but he does not allude to the rumour of their intending thereby to defeat the bill, and this is the part of Burnet's account which I think is improbable and unfounded.

<sup>28</sup> There is unfortunately a gap in Bishop King's correspondence, formerly referred to, from March 1702 to August 1704, so that we derive no light from this source. And in the State Paper Office I could find no Irish letters referring to this subject, with the exception of two, from which I have given extracts in pages 101 and 104. Swift's correspondence with Archbishop King does not properly begin till towards the end of this year.

for accomplishing their favourite measure of humbling and oppressing the Presbyterians, and it was very dexterously carried out. Had the clause in question been submitted to the Irish commons, as one of the heads of the proposed bill, when it was quite competent for them to have omitted it without endangering or interfering with the primary object of the bill, it would most probably have been opposed so vigorously, and such representations would have been made by the Whigs in England, that the government would scarcely, in the face of this preliminary opposition, have persisted in retaining the clause. It was, therefore, not brought forward in the first instance in Ireland; it was carefully withheld in order to be silently inserted in the transmitted bill, when the opposition of the Presbyterians would be too late to be effectual; when their arguments could be met by an appeal to their anti-popery feelings, not to lose so valuable a bill by their unseasonable opposition; and when their hostility could be disarmed by the assurance that they would now obtain an act of toleration, while the offensive clause might soon be repealed. The precedent set in the passing of the English Test Act obviously suggested to their enemies in the administration the mode in which this corresponding act should be introduced into Ireland, and its success justified the sagacity, or rather the cunning of the government.

That the Sacramental Test was inserted in the bill, not with the view of defeating it, but with the sincere and earnest purpose of its becoming law, is apparent from all the information that can now be obtained of its origin in England, and its reception in Ireland. On the former point, important information is afforded by Sir Gilbert Dolben, Bart., one of the judges of the court of common pleas in Ireland, a violent High-Churchman, who was then in London. Writing, in January 1704, to the Irish lord-chancellor, Sir Richard Cox, who had already signalised himself by his opposition in the Irish privy-council, in 1697, to a toleration act,<sup>29</sup> after referring to several alterations which had been made in the bill by the English council, at which he appears to

<sup>29</sup> See the preceding chapter, page 46.



have been present, Justice Dolben says—"But the noblest amendment is, that all persons having any office, civil or military, which includes offices in corporations, shall be obliged to take the oaths and to receive the sacrament according to the usage of the Church of Ireland; and in default of so doing the office to be void, and whoever shall continue to act in his respective office after having neglected thus to qualify himself within the time limited by the bill, as amended, shall incur the penalties and disabilities as are imposed by our [English] Test Act. This amendment was made by her majesty's particular direction in council, upon a due sense of the law's being defective in that great point: And I am charged to acquaint your lordship that the faithful Church of England's friends do most earnestly beseech his Grace [the lord-lieutenant] to exert his utmost interest in favour of this amendment, wherein his Grace will do an act tending highly to his own honour as well as to the advantage of the Church."<sup>30</sup> This unimpeachable testimony clearly proves that, so far from there being any design to defeat the bill by the introduction of the Sacramental Test, the High Church party, from the queen downwards, were sincerely anxious that the whole bill, as it affected both Romanists and Presbyterians, should pass the Irish parliament and become law.

There are but few materials for ascertaining how the bill was received in Ireland after its return from England, with the addition of the Sacramental Test. On the 14th of February, it was presented to the House of Commons, and read the first time. Three days afterwards, it was read a second time, without a division, when the leading Romanists petitioned to be heard by counsel against it, which was granted. At this stage of its progress, there is extant a letter from Sir Edward Southwell to the secretary of state, the Earl of Nottingham, dated the 19th of February, which exhibits the feelings of the Presbyterians on the Test clause, as ascertained by the government officials. "When first the news came of the Sacramental Test being added, there was some noise made thereat by the dissenters; and some more busy

<sup>30</sup> Harris's "Works of Sir James Ware," vol. ii. Irish Writers, page 222.



than others endeavoured to try what strength there might be in the house to favour the taking it out. But they met so little encouragement, and even those gentlemen were so sensible of the great advantages accruing by the bill for suppressing the Popish interest, that they have almost declined any farther talk about it, and I see nothing to interrupt a good conclusion."<sup>31</sup> The tide was now running so strong against dissent, that the Presbyterians and their friends in Dublin appear to have been soon disheartened, and to have been early convinced of the impossibility of defeating this oppressive measure. At all events, whether despairing of success, or perhaps deluded by hopes of its speedy repeal, they neither petitioned nor prayed to be heard by counsel against it. On the 22d of February, the counsel for the Roman Catholics pleaded their cause at the bar of the house. The principal speaker was Sir Theobald Butler, who delivered a most effective speech, the substance of which has been preserved.<sup>32</sup> Not content with proving the manifest breach of treaty with the Romanists, with which the bill was chargeable throughout, he also pointed out how undeservedly the Presbyterians were treated by the imposition of the Sacramental Test. "Surely," said this Roman Catholic advocate of Presbyterian rights, with great force and truth, "the dissenters did not do anything to deserve worse at the hands of the government than other Protestants. On the contrary, it is more than probable that if they had not put a stop

<sup>31</sup> From the State Paper Office, London. What renders the conduct of the Irish government, in thus wronging and oppressing the Presbyterians, wholly inexcusable, is the assurance they had of their firm adherence to the queen and the Protestant succession, in opposition to the attempt now made in Scotland to effect a rising for the Pretender. This same Sir Edward Southwell, writing to the Earl of Nottingham, no longer ago than the previous month, informs him :—"I have had friends in all parts of this country to sift the inclinations of the dissenters, which I find stand very firm to the government, and resolved, if Scotland were in a flame, not to join them, believing it wholly a Popish interest." (State Paper Office.) Yet he joins in excluding these persons from serving the state!

<sup>32</sup> In the "Account of the debates on the Popery Laws in the second year of Queen Anne." It is given in the Appendix (No. XVI.) to Curry's "Review of the Civil Wars in Ireland." Dub. 1810.

to the career of the Irish army at Enniskillen and Londonderry, the settlement of the government, both in England and Scotland, might not have proved so easy as it thereby did. For if that army had got to Scotland, when they had a great many friends there in arms, waiting only their coming to join them, it is easy to think what the consequence would have been to both those kingdoms. And these dissenters were then thought fit for command, both civil and military, and were no less instrumental in contributing to reducing the kingdom than any other Protestants. To pass a bill now to deprive them of their birthrights for those their good services, would surely be a most unkind return, and the worst reward ever granted to a people so deserving. Whatever the Papists may be supposed to have deserved, the dissenters certainly stand as clean in the face of the present government as any other people whatever; and if this is all the return they are like to get, it will be but a slender encouragement, if ever occasion should require, for others to pursue their example." The arguments and appeals of counsel were of course of no avail; the bill passed through the committee, and was reported to the house on the following day, and ordered to be engrossed.

An attempt was now made to soothe the Presbyterians, by leading them to believe that they would now at length obtain the legal toleration of which they had been so long deprived. For, immediately after the bill had been carried through the committee, where the Presbyterians made the only opposition which they appear to have offered during its progress, the house ordered that leave be given to bring in heads of a bill "to give such toleration to Protestant dissenters in Ireland as is by law allowed Protestant dissenters in England."<sup>33</sup> So far the High Church party seemed disposed to act at least consistently, by granting legal security to the Presbyterian Church, now when the only obstacle to such a measure had been removed, by the imposition of the Sacramental Test. But that this resolution of the commons was a mere sham, is evident from various circumstances. The duty of preparing the proposed Toleration Act was devolved on four country members of

<sup>33</sup> Journals of Irish Commons, vol. iii. page 182.

comparatively little weight in the house or kingdom.<sup>34</sup> Had there been any real intention to carry such a measure, it would have been consigned to some members of the administration, or their supporters. Accordingly no further step was taken in the matter, and no allusion whatever is made to it in the correspondence between the Irish and English governments during the remainder of this reign. On the 25th of February, the bill was read a third time, and sent to the lords; and on the following day, Sir Edward Southwell again wrote to the Earl of Nottingham, giving the following official version of the arguments urged in the commons, when in committee on the bill, both for and against the Sacramental Test.<sup>35</sup> "All the clauses against the Papists passed unanimously, till we came to the Sacramental Test, and upon this we had above two hours' debate. It was objected that this was creating a new distinction in this country, of Church and dissenter, when there ought only to be that of Protestant and Papist; that it weakened our Protestant interest thereby when we were provoking the Papists afresh; that it was an ill requital to the dissenters who had so signalised themselves in the defence of Derry and the northern parts in the late revolution in this kingdom; that in case of any foreign invasion, it put them out of capacity, without great penalty, of showing the same zeal; and that it was more sensible [*i.e.*, more grievous] to the dissenters here, because they have no toleration by law as in England. And some very few in the height of their resentment were pleased to say, they thought this was added on purpose to hazard the bill. All these matters were very sufficiently answered, and showed that no particular hardship was designed towards them; that, in fact, there were more of the Church at Enniskillen, and at least one-half at Derry; that

<sup>34</sup> These members were Messrs. Henry Maxwell of Finneybrogue, member for Bangor, John Tench, for Old Leighlin, Wm. Conolly, for the county of Londonderry, and Richard Warburton, for Ballyshannon. Mr. Conolly was certainly a leading Whig, and under that party, and especially under George I., a man of considerable weight; but at this period his influence was very limited in such a house.

<sup>35</sup> From the State Paper Office, London. The letter is dated February 26th.

even in the North above eight in ten of the gentry were Churchmen; that tho' in those parts the commonalty might exceed in dissenters, all parish offices and duties were excused in this bill; that in cases of public danger and invasion all people were obliged, both in duty and interest, to oppose the common enemy; that if ever we hoped a union with England, it could not be expected they would ever do it but upon the same terms that they stand upon; and that in England the dissenters have both writ for and preached conformity where it was for their interest and advantage. And as to this I must observe that the dissenters here have writ very earnestly against occasional conformity, which they now wish had been let alone. When at last this paragraph was put to the vote, there were not above twenty negatives."<sup>36</sup> The bill passed rapidly through the House of Lords, where the Roman Catholic petitioners were again heard by counsel, and it received the royal assent on the 4th of March, the day on which the session terminated.

Thus was consummated this flagrant injustice towards the Presbyterians of Ireland, who were not only deeply insulted and injured, but were cajoled and deceived throughout the whole affair. The jealous and hostile feelings of the bishops and High Church party were now fully satiated. They had turned the dissenters out of all public places of trust and emolument; and having secured that object, which they formerly alleged was the only obstacle to the granting of a legal toleration, they now conveniently forgot those declarations, and withheld the promised toleration. The Irish Presbyterians were now, therefore, in a much worse position than their brethren in England. Like them, indeed, they were excluded from the public service, but their Church was still unrecognised in law, while the English dissenters

<sup>36</sup> There is reason to believe that Sir Edward Southwell estimated too low the amount of the opposition in the commons to the Sacramental Test. De Foe, in his "Parallel," &c., says that it was opposed by nearly a hundred members of the Established Church; but though he appears to have had access to the best sources of information, this estimate of his probably errs in the other direction by being too high. See "Writings of the Author of the True-Born Englishman," vol. ii. page 381.



enjoyed full security for their worship and government. The disabilities created by this act extended to all civil and military appointments under the crown. No Presbyterian could henceforth hold any office in any department of the army or navy, nor in the customs, excise, or post-office, nor in or about any of the courts of law, whether in Dublin or in the provinces, nor in the magistracy of the kingdom, without conforming to the Established Church. They were also excluded by this bill from all municipal offices in the corporate towns of Ireland. A remarkable instance of its operation in this respect occurred in the city of Derry. No fewer than ten out of twelve aldermen, and fourteen out of twenty-four burgesses, being Presbyterians, were turned out of their respective offices;<sup>37</sup> and that, too, in a city which most of these very men had contributed to preserve, by their services and sufferings during the siege, but in which they were now ignominiously branded by the government as unworthy to hold the humblest offices! Most of the magistrates throughout Ulster were in like manner deprived of their commissions, not more than two or three having qualified according to the act, and great difficulty was experienced in filling their places; so much so, that "men of little estates, youths, new-comers, and clergymen, having nothing to recommend them to the dignity of magistrates but their going to church," were placed on the commission of the peace.<sup>38</sup> So general were the words of the act, that the

<sup>37</sup> The names of these deeply-injured members of the Presbyterian Church deserve to be recorded here. The aldermen were Alexander Lecky, James Lennox, Henry Long, Horace Kennedy, Edward Brooks, Robert Shannon, all these had been mayors; William Mackie, John Cowan, Hugh Davey, these three had served the office of sheriff; and William Smith. The burgesses were Alexander Skipton and Joseph Davey, then sheriffs; John Harvey, chamberlain; Robert Harvey, Robert Gamble, John Dixon, Francis Neville, John Rankin, Joseph Morrison, Archibald Cunningham, James Anderson, David Cairns, John Cunningham, and James Strong. I am also indebted for these names to my nephew, Edward Reid, Esq., of Derry, who extracted them from the records of the corporation.

<sup>38</sup> De Foe's "Parallel," &c. The following testimonies from three Irish ministers amply corroborate De Foe's statement in the text. The Rev. Mr. M'Cracken, writing to a friend in Scotland in July 1704, says—"The Sacramental Test is going fast on with all concerned, and some officers in the



ministers at first conceived they would be prevented by it from accepting their portion of the Royal Bounty ; for it provided that every one receiving a salary under a patent from the crown should be required to take the sacrament in the Established Church, under severe penalties if this form were neglected. Under these circumstances, the synod in this year appointed Mr. Iredell to consult the solicitor-general, who was also the speaker of the House of Commons, Allan Brodrick, Esq., whether they "might with safety take the R. D. if tendered, considering the late act." His opinion, as reported to the synod in the following year, was, that they might continue to receive it with safety, inasmuch as it did not accrue to them out of any office or place of trust bestowed by the sovereign.

This ungrateful treatment, which the Irish Presbyterians thus experienced at the hands of the government, was felt and represented in England. "Strong representations were made to the

excise, customs and army, that were of ours have taken it ; but none of the justices of the peace nor mayors of corporations that I hear of." Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. ii., No. 75. And, in October following, he adds—"There are some who had offices that have taken it, and so have qualified themselves to continue therein. As I shall suppose this was done without consulting ministers of our way, so I hope none of ours will take upon them to defend it. Tho' it is known Baxter was for it, I am persuaded the generality of the North will be against it. But what the South may do I cannot tell ; only a little time will show whether they will receive the testers as orderly members of their congregations to communicate again with them as formerly." Ibid, vol. ii., No. 76. The Rev. Mr. Kirkpatrick, then minister of Templepatrick, writing to Principal Stirling of Glasgow college, in November following, says—"The generality of our people who had places of trust have continued firm and steadfast to our principles, notwithstanding of the temptation they were led into by the Sacramental Test, and so have laid down their commissions. But some few have complied, as must be expected in all such cases." Stirling's MS. Letters, vol. iv., No. 118. And the Rev. Mr. Lang of Loughbrickland furnishes this additional testimony :—"All dissenters, except a few who have conformed so far as to communicate with the Church, have let their offices fall, to the great prejudice of the country. Several able justices of the peace being by this act rendered incapable to serve their queen and country (not to name officers of the army, &c.), and their places are generally filled with raw, inexperienced men, and particularly with clergymen." Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. vi., No. 59.

court by those who thought they had influence, but nothing could avail against the bigotry of the ministers." That indefatigable writer, Daniel De Foe, though a prisoner in Newgate for his inimitable satire, "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters," took up his pen in their behalf, and early in this year published a pamphlet, to which he gave the sarcastic title—"The Parallel; or Persecution of Protestants the Shortest Way to Prevent the Growth of Popery in Ireland."<sup>39</sup> He shows himself to have been remarkably well acquainted with the history and position of the Irish Presbyterians. He vindicates their claims to a different treatment from what they had now received with great vigour, and exposes, with considerable force of argument and wit, the dishonourable conduct of government. On this point he observes, in the style of that period—"It seems somewhat hard, and savours of the most scandalous ingratitude, that the very people who drank deepest of the Popish fury, and were the most vigorous to show both their zeal and their courage in opposing tyranny and Popery, and on the foot of whose forwardness and valour the Church of Ireland recovered herself from her low condition, should now be requited with so injurious a treatment as to be linked with those very Papists they fought against." Referring to an observation of Archbishop King,<sup>40</sup> in 1691, that the dissenters' liberality to the Episcopal clergy, when impoverished by the war, "ought to be remembered to their honour," De Foe very pointedly remarks, that "instead of being remembered to their honour, they have been ranked amongst the worst enemies to the Church, and chained to a bill to prevent the growth of Popery. This will certainly be no encouragement to the dissenters to join with their brethren the next time the Papists shall please to take arms and attempt their throats. Not but they may perhaps be fools enough, as they always were, to stand in the gap; but if ever the crisis should arise, would not all the world call them fools to do anything again that merits to be 'remembered to their

<sup>39</sup> London, 4to, 1704. Republished in the second volume of the "Writings of the Author of the True-born Englishman," pages 365-416. Lond. 1705, 8vo.

<sup>40</sup> In his "State of the Protestants of Ireland under King James II." 4th edit., Lond. 1692, page 260.

honour?" If this be the Church's method of 'remembering' favours, if this be their returns of gratitude, let them fight for them next time that dare trust their temper." Towards the conclusion of the pamphlet, he thus ridicules the introduction of such a measure into an act avowedly "to prevent the further growth of Popery:"—"Will any man in the world tell us that to divide the Protestants is a way to prevent the further growth of Popery, when their united force is little enough to keep it down? This is like sinking the ship to drown the rats, or cutting off the foot to cure the corns. This would merit some satire, if the case was not really too sad and serious to bear a banter. If these are Church of Ireland politics, for shame, gentlemen, never reproach the native Irish for winking when they shoot; for never marksman took such aim as this. 'Tis such a tale of a tub, the very Irish themselves must of necessity laugh at it; for what could be of more service to the Popish interest in that kingdom than to see the Protestants thus divided and persecuting each other?"<sup>41</sup>

All the reasoning or influence which the Presbyterians and their friends in both kingdoms could employ, failed to effect any change in the disposition of the government towards them. At the reassembling of the parliament in the spring of the following year, a few leading Presbyterian gentlemen, who had suffered under the test clause, presented a petition to parliament against it. These petitioners were Arthur Upton, William Hamilton, Archibald Edmonstone, William Cunningham, William Cairns, David Buttle, and William Mackie, Esquires.<sup>42</sup> Their petition was pre-

<sup>41</sup> In this valuable pamphlet, De Foe states a fact which I have not seen mentioned elsewhere. In his writings, *ut supra*, vol. ii. page 391, he says—"The late Queen Mary had so true a sense on her mind of the courage and fidelity of the dissenters in Derry, that she gave them a mark of her royal favour in money, to be employed to rebuild their market-house, and to erect a new meeting-house in that city."

<sup>42</sup> The following brief notices of these gentlemen may be interesting to many of my readers:—ARTHUR UPTON was the head of the family of Castle Upton, near Templepatrick, now ennobled by the title of Viscount Templeton. He was now advanced in years, and had been a consistent loyalist and Presbyterian through all the trying vicissitudes of the seventeenth century. He had refused, like the other Presbyterians, to take the oath of fidelity to

sented to the House of Commons on the 14th of March, "on behalf of themselves and the rest of the Protestant dissenting subjects of Ireland;" and, according to the meagre entry on the journals of the house, it merely set forth "some difficulties they lie under by the clause in the act to prevent the further growth of Popery, relating to the Sacramental Test."<sup>43</sup> A copy of this petition has been preserved,<sup>44</sup> which shows how imperfectly its purport and prayer are here described. In it they exhibit pretty

the commonwealth, and was consequently ordered to remove to Munster; (chap. xvi. note 1, and App.) He early appeared for King William, raised a regiment from among his tenantry, took an active part in the revolution, and formed one of the deputation from the Irish Presbyterians who waited on the king in London; (chap. xix. note 72, and text.) He had been a representative in parliament for the county of Antrim during forty years; but he had now retired, and his son and successor, Colonel Clotworthy Upton, worthily occupied his place, attended the synod as elder from Templepatrick, and warmly supported the Presbyterian interests there. WILLIAM HAMILTON was of Killileagh, in the county of Down, a lineal descendant of the first Lord Claneboy and Earl of Clanbrasil, and inherited a part of his estate. ARCHIBALD EDMONSTONE was of Redhall, or Broadisland, near Carrickfergus, but was generally known by his Scottish designation, the Laird of Duntreath. He was the ancestor, in a direct line, of the present Sir Archibald Edmonstone, Bart., of Duntreath, in Scotland. So long as this ancient family resided in Ulster, they were the steady and attached friends of the Presbyterian Church; (chap. xii. note 27.) WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM lived within the bounds of the presbytery of Tyrone, and I believe was the head of the family of that name now of Springhill, near Moneymore. WILLIAM CAIRNS was of the family of that name in Monaghan; he was at this time a merchant in Dublin, and one of the representatives in parliament for the borough of Belfast. DAVID BUTTLE was an eminent merchant in Belfast, and probably a descendant of the Rev. David Buttle, minister of Ballymena; (see chap. xii. note 8.) WILLIAM MACKIE was of the city of Derry, where he had served as an officer during the siege, and was one of the aldermen who had been turned out of office the previous year by the Sacramental Test.

<sup>43</sup> Journals of Irish Commons, vol. iii. p. 279. In the latest edition of these Irish Journals (Dub. 1796, vol. ii. part i. page 451), a very full abstract of this petition is inserted in the proceedings—a significant proof of the great change of sentiment towards the Presbyterians which had taken place in the meantime, though I presume it is not usual to make such an alteration in parliamentary journals.

<sup>44</sup> In "Presbyterian Loyalty," pages 563, 564.



fully the unshaken loyalty of the Presbyterian body, and the important services rendered by it to the Protestant religion and the liberties of the empire. They complain of their having been disabled by the clause in question "from executing any public trust for the service of her majesty, the Protestant religion, and their country." They point out the impolicy of dividing the Protestants, while the Romanists were six to one of the entire Protestant population; and they conclude with praying the house "to order a bill for restoring such a considerable part of the Protestants of this kingdom to a capacity of defending her majesty's sacred person and government, and the Protestant succession as by law established."

The unaltered temper of the commons was clearly evinced by the manner in which this petition was received. Sir Edward Southwell, writing on the evening of the day on which it was presented to Mr. Secretary Hedges, in London, has given the following account of its reception:—"This day a petition was presented to the house in the name of the Dissenters in the North, setting forth their zeal for the Protestant interest, and praying that the clause for the Sacramental Test passed in our act of Popery last session might be repealed. There were many warm speeches upon it, but they generally ran, whether to lay the petition on the table, or to give them leave to withdraw it, or to reject it. And it being declared that it was not intended it should revive again, the house agreed to use the civilest way in laying it on the table, and at the same time ordered no notice should be taken thereof in the printed votes."<sup>45</sup>

So discouraging a reception as this was could scarcely have been expected by the Presbyterians. It must have convinced them that it was in vain to look for any redress of their grievances from this parliament, which, the longer it sat, became only the more intolerant. Among the indications of its hostility is to be enumerated an attempt to abolish their privilege of celebrating marriage. Two years before, there had been a report that parliament intended to prohibit these marriages, but it proved to be ground-

<sup>45</sup> From the State Paper Office, London.



less, or at least premature.<sup>46</sup> The prosecutions in the ecclesiastical courts, however, were still carried on against both ministers and people ; and it is curious to find it stated that, besides this source of annoyance, some of the High Church bigots had been pleased to take offence at Presbyterians for pursuing their ordinary labours on the week-day festivals in the Anglican calendar, and had even prosecuted several in the bishops' courts for this new offence.<sup>47</sup> The Irish government at this period appears to have discountenanced, as far as they could, these prosecutions, especially those against marriages. In the autumn of the year 1704, when certain members of the Presbyterian congregation of Lisburn had, along with several others, been excommunicated by the ecclesiastical courts for having been married by their own ministers, and refusing to acknowledge themselves guilty of fornication, Mr. M'Cracken laid the case before the lord-chancellor, Sir Richard Cox, with the view of obtaining relief. His lordship appears to have afforded all that was in his power, but this amounted to no more than a promise that he would take care no writ for seizing excommunicated persons should issue,<sup>48</sup> which, though it freed them from the dread of a gaol, left them still liable to be imprisoned under a less tolerant government. Their opponents then brought the question of these marriages before parliament. Early in March, there was introduced into the House of Commons a bill for preventing clandestine, or rather forced marriages, containing certain clauses, the effect of which would have been to render Presbyterian marriages null and void in law. Their friends in parliament, however, remonstrated successfully against this application of the measure ; and, as Mr. M'Bride wrote to a friend in Scotland—"the speaker, Mr. Brodrick, managed that matter so well as to get these clauses struck out." In this form the bill was transmitted to England ; and, he adds, "if it come over without amendments, it declares those only to be clandestine marriages where there is no proclamation of banns or dispensation [*i.e.*, a

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Mr. M'Cracken, Oct. 4, 1703. Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. ii., No 68.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, vol. ii., No. 75, dated July 21, 1704.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, vol. ii., No. 76, dated Oct. 13, 1704.

special license] from the bishop."<sup>49</sup> The projected bill, however, was not returned from England; and though several statutes regulating marriage in Ireland were passed during this reign, no attempt was again made to interfere with the validity of Presbyterian marriages.<sup>50</sup>

After a brief recess, during which the lord-lieutenant made a progress through Ulster, and received loyal and dutiful addresses from the Presbyterian ministers at Antrim, Derry, and Monaghan,<sup>51</sup> the parliament reassembled in May, and their hostility to dissenters was still unabated. They soon after adopted certain resolutions which were intended to inflict additional injury on the Presbyterian Church, and to bring down the penalties of the law on individual ministers. The High Church party in the North had been long dissatisfied with the establishment and success of the philosophy school at Killileagh, superintended by the Rev. James M'Alpine. They longed to see it forcibly closed, in order to check, if not altogether prevent, further supplies of candidates for the Presbyterian ministry. But they were unable to effect their purpose by the ordinary course of law; for Mr. M'Alpine had obtained a license from the chancellor of the diocese, and had duly taken all the oaths required of teachers. They now, therefore, had recourse to the House of Commons, whose temper at this crisis was so congenial with their own, and induced them to adopt the following resolution, which, though general, was intended to apply solely to this particular school:—"Resolved: That the erecting and continuing any seminary for the instruction and education of youth in principles contrary to the Established Church and government, tends to create and perpetuate misunderstandings among Protestants,"—a reason which it was singularly inconsistent for those to

<sup>49</sup> Letter to Principal Stirling, April 26, 1705. Stirling MS. Letters, vol. iv., No. 119.

<sup>50</sup> See 2 Anne, chap. 6; and 6 Anne, chap. 16.

<sup>51</sup> Crawford's "History of Ireland," vol. ii. p. 259. Copies of the addresses, presented to his excellency at Antrim on the 18th of April, and at Monaghan, may be seen, with their respective signatures, in [Chamberlayne's] "Complete History of Europe for the year 1705." Lond. 1706, 8vo.

urge who had created much more fatal and mischievous misunderstandings among Protestants by their Sacramental Test. The next object of the same narrow-minded party in parliament was to call forth the dormant penalties of the law against the three or four loyal, though conscientiously scrupulous ministers, who had refused to take the oath of abjuration. Hitherto no one in Ulster had been base enough to put the law in execution against them; for they were well known to be sincerely opposed to the Pretender's claims, and ardently attached to the cause of the queen and the Protestant succession. This forbearance was galling to their bigoted opponents, who now obtained from the commons this resolution, to countenance them in the effort they were determined to make to punish these ministers:—"Resolved: That preaching or teaching in separate congregations by persons who have not taken the oath of abjuration, and hearing, maintaining, and countenancing such persons, tends to defeat the succession of the crown in the Protestant line, and to encourage and advance the interest of the pretended Prince of Wales." Still, another link in the chain of persecution was wanting before it could be made to reach their victims. It was necessary to overcome the reluctance of the northern magistracy, who were averse from enforcing against these loyal ministers penalties which were designed to apply solely to disloyal and traitorous Jacobites. Accordingly the commons further "Resolved: That all judges and magistrates are under the highest obligations to make diligent inquiry into all such wicked practices [specified in the preceding resolution], and do their utmost endeavours to discover and punish the authors of them; and such [magistrates] as wilfully neglect the same, ought to be looked upon as enemies to her majesty's government and the prosperity of this kingdom."<sup>52</sup>

Unhappily for the peace and comfort of the non-juring ministers, these violent resolutions were not inoperative. Though the injury intended by the first of them did not reach the seminary of Killileagh, the two other resolutions so inflamed the zeal of the High-Churchmen of Belfast and its neighbourhood, that an

<sup>52</sup> Journals of the Irish Commons, vol. iii. p. 319. These three resolutions were adopted on June 1, 1705.

informer was found to swear against Mr. M'Bride, before an Episcopalian minister, who was a magistrate; and a warrant having been taken out for his apprehension,<sup>53</sup> he was compelled, in the end of the year, to retire to Scotland, where he was forced to remain for above three years, though happily still employed in the work of the ministry. He resided in Glasgow, where he held the charge of one of the city churches, and sat as a member of the established presbytery of Glasgow. The indignation of the Episcopalian zealots was principally directed against Mr. M'Bride, not only from his occupying in Belfast a more prominent position than the other non-jurors, but perhaps, also, from his having escaped the penalties which they had hoped to bring down upon him in 1698, on account of his synodical sermon. His writings had annoyed them very much, and to these he had recently added another still more objectionable in their eyes. When the prosecutions against the ministers for celebrating marriage were at their height, he published anonymously an elaborate defence of their conduct in a pamphlet, the title of which may be given in full, as it furnishes an outline of the various topics discussed in it. He entitled it, "A Vindication of Marriage, as solemnised by Presbyterians in the North of Ireland. Wherein (1.) their principles, practice, and reasons thereof are candidly shown, with the causes of their nonconformity to the form prescribed in the liturgy. (2.) The libels exhibited against ministers and people in the official [*i.e.*, ecclesiastical] courts are examined and answered. (3.) And such marriages proven to be agreeable to Scripture, light of nature, laws of nations, and customs of other reformed churches, and not inconsistent with the civil laws of this land; and, therefore, lawful, tho' not canonical. By a Minister of the Gospel."<sup>54</sup> This work exhibits Mr. M'Bride's learning and talents in a very favourable light; but, on this now obsolete topic, it is unnecessary to enter into particu-

<sup>53</sup> [Tisdall's] "Conduct of the Dissenters," p. 81. The magistrate was the Rev. Mr. Winder, who succeeded Dean Swift as prebendary of Kilroot, but who appears to have resided in the parish of Carnmoney, near Belfast. See "Swift's Works," Scott's edition, vol. xv. p. 241.

<sup>54</sup> [Belfast] 1702, 4to, pp. 71.



lars. It called forth two replies from ministers of the Established Church, neither of which, however, was published till a couple of years after its appearance. The first of these was published anonymously, but it was well known to have been written by the Rev. Ralph Lambert, D.D., who afterwards became chaplain to Lord Wharton, when lord-lieutenant, and under his patronage was made Dean of Down, whence he rose to be Bishop of Down, and ultimately of Meath. It appeared under this title, "An Answer to a late Pamphlet, entitled, 'A Vindication of Marriage, as solemnised by Presbyterians in the North of Ireland.'" <sup>55</sup> He pleads strenuously for depriving Presbyterian ministers of all power to celebrate marriage, and treats his opponent's arguments in a very flippant and contemptuous manner. Mr. McBride was next attacked by a former opponent of his, the Rev. Edward Synge, who does not seem to have been aware that he was encountering the same person to whom he had once before replied, in his "Defence of his Peaceable and Friendly Address to the Nonconformists."<sup>56</sup> Mr. Synge entitled his work, "A Defence of the Established Church and Laws."<sup>57</sup> Being chaplain to the lord-lieutenant, the Duke of Ormond, he dedicates it to his patron, and he published it early in the year 1705. He treats his unknown opponent with more respect and less arrogance than Dr. Lambert, while his defence of the exclusive right of the Established Church to solemnise marriage is much more effective than his.

A case of discipline, arising out of the marriage of a Presbyterian minister, which also came before the bishop's court, was likely at this crisis to endanger the liberties of church judicatories. The Rev. William Gray, minister of Taughboyne, between Raphoe and Derry, was charged with having been clandestinely, and, therefore, irregularly married, some time previously. The complaint was brought by his presbytery before the synod in 1706, and a committee was appointed to meet at Strabane, in the month of July, to investigate the charge. Seve-

<sup>55</sup> Dublin, 1704, 4to, pp. 64.

<sup>56</sup> See chap. xxi., note 16 and text.

<sup>57</sup> Dublin, 1705, 18mo, pp. 301.

ral persons were cited in the usual form, as witnesses, but care had been taken that no member of the Established Church was summoned to give evidence. This proceeding was reported to the judge of assize on the summer circuit, who took occasion to denounce it from the bench in severe terms, as an exercise of foreign jurisdiction expressly prohibited by law. He charged the grand jury to prosecute all such illegal meetings as dared to summon before them any of the queen's subjects; and, at the same time, declared that the members of that synodical committee would be forthwith called up to Dublin by the lords-justices, to answer for their breach of the law. This threat, however, was not executed. Whatever may have been the prejudices of the Irish government against the Presbyterians, the administration in England were at this time disposed to protect them as far as lay in their power, and, wherever they could do so with effect, to restrain the High Church party from prosecuting Presbyterians on mere points of nonconformity.<sup>58</sup>

While parliamentary resolutions and Episcopalian pamphlets, assisted by overzealous judges, were thus stirring up strife and ill-will, the Church was steadily devoting her energies both to the defence and the propagation of evangelical truth. The former of these objects she endeavoured to secure by a law enacted by the synod in 1705, to the effect that all persons, licensed or ordained, should be required to subscribe the Westminster Confession of Faith, as the confession of their faith. The latter object she resolved to promote by the institution of a missionary fund for the support of infant congregations in the south and west of the kingdom. At this date, the Presbyterians in Galway,

<sup>58</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. vi., No. 59. Mr. M'Cracken, writing to Wodrow, in October 1704, furnishes an unequivocal proof of the tolerant spirit of the English administration. The High Church party, he says, "are as much embittered as ever, but are some way kept in. An instance is this: the Bishop of Kildare had excommunicated one Mr. Persons for preaching, and was proceeding against him to have had him taken. But some sent a representation of it to England, and there came a letter discharging him to trouble any upon the account of nonconformity; and so that is at an end." Ibid, vol. ii., No. 76. I have not been able to learn anything of Mr. Persons, referred to in this letter.

Dundalk, and Athlone, were already looking to the synod of Ulster for ministers to visit and take charge of them as congregations, as well as for aid towards the support of a permanent ministry among them. To meet the necessities of these scattered and neglected members of their communion, the synod, in the year 1706, appointed a number of laymen<sup>59</sup> and ministers in each

<sup>59</sup> The names of these laymen are worthy of being preserved, as they were doubtless among the most zealous and active members of the Presbyterian community, and as they indicate some of the principal families at this period connected with the Church. In *Down* presbytery, the gentlemen appointed were CAPTAIN STEVENSON, who was of Killileagh, and JOHN BLACKWOOD, who was of Ballyleidy, in the county of Down. It is singular to find these two gentlemen mentioned together, for, from the intermarriage of the son of the latter with the only daughter of the former, has sprung the family of the present Lord Dufferin. In *Belfast* presbytery were Mr. UPTON and Mr. EDMONSTONE, both mentioned in this chapter, note 42, Mr. ARTHUR MAXWELL, who was of Drumbeg, near Lisburn, a gentleman of great liberality, who, in his will, dated in 1720, bequeathed the munificent sum of £1300, the interest of which was to be applied to aid newly-erected congregations in the North of Ireland in the support of their ministers, and the surplus, if any, to assist in educating poor students for the Presbyterian ministry. What has become of this fund I have not been able to discover. Mr. DALWAY, the ancestor of the present family of Bellahill, near Carrickfergus, a family long distinguished for their ardent attachment to the Presbyterian Church, and Mr. HENRY CHADS, one of the first merchants in Belfast. In *Antrim* presbytery were CAPTAIN SHAW of the Bush, near Antrim, and Mr. JOHN SHAW of Ballygelly, near Larne. In *Convoy* presbytery were CAPTAIN HENDERSON of Castletown, near Strabane, and Mr. MORTIMER of Ramelton. In *Armagh* presbytery was CAPTAIN HUGH MOORE, an elder in the congregation of Moira. In *Coleraine* presbytery were COLONEL HAMILTON, a member of the Dunnemanna family, and settled at Mount Hamilton, about half way between Ballymena and Ballymoney; CAPTAIN GALLAND of Vow, in the parish of Fillyoy;\* Mr. HEYLAND of Coleraine, ancestor of the Heylands of Glendaragh, near Cromlin, and Mr. JOHN THOMSON, who was also of Coleraine, and a member of its corporation. In *Tyrone* presbytery were Mr. ANDREW STEWART, the ancestor of the present Lord Castlestewart, and Mr. WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM, mentioned in note 42 of this chapter. And in *Monaghan* presbytery were Mr. CAIRNS of Monaghan, and Mr. CAIRNS of Augher, in the county of Tyrone, ancestor of the Cairns of Killyfaddy. I may add

\* I find one of his ancestors, Mr. John Galland of Vow, was high-sheriff of the county in 1679, and that Mr. Benjamin Galland of Vow was high-sheriff in 1702, and again in 1708.

presbytery to solicit subscriptions throughout Ulster. These gentlemen collected about one hundred and ten pounds, as reported to the next synod; and with this sum, which was likely to be increased in subsequent years, missionary operations were commenced. Ministers were statelily sent to visit isolated societies of Presbyterians in remote parts of the kingdom, and in a short time the synod was engaged, not only in organising congregations in the towns already mentioned, Galway, Dundalk, and Athlone, but were also supplying with ordinances the Presbyterians in Belturbet, Aughmacart, Drogheda, Edenderry, Summerhill, and other places.

While the synod was thus extending the blessings of a stated ministry to the scattered members of their Church remote from Ulster, events in England were hastening the return of their friends to power. The elections for members of parliament in the summer of 1705, exhibited a decided majority throughout England for the Whig party; and from the time that the new parliament met, in the end of October, they rapidly regained possession of the government. The first effect of this change which was felt in Ireland was the removal of the Duke of Ormond from the lord-lieutenancy, and the appointment of lords-justices. In the end of April 1707, the Earl of Pembroke was prevailed upon to undertake the government of Ireland, and, on the 14th of June following, he arrived in Dublin, and was sworn into office. The appointment of this nobleman, the well-known friend of toleration, was hailed by the Presbyterians as encouraging a hope that the ignominious disqualification created by the Sacramental Test might be abolished. So far as his excellency and the administration which he represented were concerned, this hope would not have been disappointed, as it was one of his instructions to endeavour to effect the repeal or modification of that obnoxious and impolitic law. Accordingly, when he opened the session of the Irish parliament on the 7th of July, he gave a significant indication of the wishes of the queen and her ministers in these words, "I am commanded by her majesty to recommend

that, so far as I have been able to learn, not a single representative of these families is now a member of the Presbyterian Church.



to you unanimity among yourselves, and to inform you that her majesty, considering the number of Papists in this realm, would be glad of any expedient for the strengthening the interest of her Protestant subjects in this kingdom."<sup>60</sup> But the influence of the High Church party, who, just in proportion as their bigotry had been gratified, were becoming every year more inflamed against the Presbyterians, was too powerful to permit any alteration of the law in their favour. It is stated in a pamphlet called forth by a subsequent attempt to repeal the test, that the friends of the Presbyterians in the commons moved for an address to the queen, to the effect, "that the house would accept of an expedient from her majesty," which might unite the Irish Protestants in her service, and that this motion was rejected.<sup>61</sup> No trace of such a motion, nor, indeed, of any motion connected with the test, appears on the journals of the commons during this session. But, on the last day of July, when the government submitted a draft of the customary address to the queen in reply to the opening speech of the lord-lieutenant, several divisions took place thereon, when an entire paragraph, which probably contained a proposal to the effect stated in the pamphlet referred to, was struck out by a majority of ninety-three against seventy-three. This adverse vote, or some other circumstance, appears to have convinced the government that any alteration in the operation of the Sacramental Test for this session was altogether hopeless. The secretary for Ireland, writing to an official of the

<sup>60</sup> Journals of the Irish Commons, vol. iii. p. 364.

<sup>61</sup> See "A Narrative of the several attempts which the Dissenters of Ireland have made for a Repeal of the Sacramental Test." This was the second of Dean Swift's tracts in favour of the Test Act, according to Sir Walter Scott's arrangement; but though the dean had access to the best sources of information, his "Narrative" is very confused and inaccurate. As it now stands, it did not appear until the year 1731, but Sir Walter states that it was first published in a periodical called the "Correspondent." This, however, is a mistake. That paper did not appear till 1731, whereas the early portion of the "Narrative" must have been published before the year 1715, because I find the greater part of it, word for word, in Tisdall's "Case of the Sacramental Test, stated and argued," (preface, pp. 4-13), which appeared in that year.

administration in London, a few days after this division, thus describes the state of parties in the commons:<sup>62</sup>—"As to the other grand affair, I mean the taking off the Sacramental Test, it was impracticable in this house, and will ever be so as long as this parliament continues, which is made up of two-thirds of as High-Churchmen as any in England. You would hardly believe there should be such a creature as an Irish Protestant Jacobite; and yet 'tis most certain there are a great many such monsters. I forbear to enlarge any farther on these unaccountable productions; but if it be my fortune to see you next winter, I will tell you and prove it too, that this country is very near as much under the power and influence of the clergy as the people of Italy are. And if care be not taken of them, in a short time they will put what measures they please on the civil power." And a few days after, in a letter to the same correspondent, he expresses a similar opinion, and extends it to the House of Lords. "I entirely agree with you that nothing less than the taking off the Sacramental Test can remedy the growing evils this country labours under. But unless the government will call a new parliament, and sincerely espouse the taking it off, it will not be done. Two-thirds of the members of this present House of Commons are as high-fliers as Manly Ward, Byerly, &c. And in the other house, the bishops (every man of them) are as high as Laud was, and have so great an influence on the temporal lords (most of whom have as little sense as the Lord Abereorn), that they are at least six to one against the honest lords."

At the close of the session, the commons found another opportunity of displaying their zeal for upholding the test with

<sup>62</sup> Letter from Mr. George Doddington to Mr. Hopkins, dated August 14, 1707, in the State Paper Office, London. Mr. Doddington had accompanied Lord Pembroke to Ireland; he was elected member for the borough of Charlemont in the previous month, and is styled in the "Journals" Mr. Secretary Doddington. It appears from this letter that the repeal of the test was specially given in charge to Lord Pembroke, and that some trial of strength had occurred between the parties just before this letter was written, in which the government were defeated. Hence the secretary's warmth of indignation against the High Church party, as evinced in this and the next letter, quoted in the text, also taken from the original in the State Paper Office.

even increased rigour. Hitherto, with the exception of Derry, the Presbyterian members of the several corporations in Ulster continued to hold their municipal offices, though they had ceased to act since the passing of the test, their Episcopalian brethren being reluctant to dispossess them by new elections. An inquiry having been instituted by the House of Commons into a disputed election by the corporation of Belfast of a member of parliament for the borough, it was discovered that the majority of the burgesses had ceased to act, on account of their not having received the sacrament in the Episcopal Church. This was too tempting an opportunity for aiming another blow at the Presbyterians to be neglected by a House of Commons such as the present one was. They dexterously availed themselves of this case to impose such an interpretation on the Sacramental Test clause, as to render compulsory what had been considered only as optional, and to have it declared that the office of burgess was vacated in every case in which the occupant had not qualified by becoming a conformist. A resolution to this effect having been proposed to the house, the previous question was moved by the Whigs; but, though supported by all the influence of government, it was carried against them by a majority of sixty-five to fifty-three.<sup>63</sup> This division occurred on the 28th of October, the session was closed on the 30th, and on the 2d of November, Mr. Secretary Doddington gave the following account of this affair to the Earl of Sunderland:—"The Tories have, in this last meeting of parliament, made a great battle about a town called Belfast, in which place we brought in Mr. Ogle in opposition to one Mr. Cairns,<sup>64</sup> Mr. Gold's of London his brother-in-law. In the examination of the merits of that election, it appeared several burgesses, being dissenters, had not taken the sacrament, &c., nor acted for some

<sup>63</sup> Journals of the Irish Commons, vol. iii. p. 545, 546.

<sup>64</sup> The vacancy was created by the death of their former representative, William Cairns, Esq., merchant in Dublin, who died August the 7th. His funeral sermon was preached and published by the Rev. Mr. Boyse of Dublin, who was his minister. The disappointed candidate was Mr. Alexander Cairns, probably a relative; he was a merchant and banker in London, and also carried on business in Dublin.

years past. Our antagonists brought that on again as to the matter of burgesses being qualified, and carried two resolutions, and they now give out that this will be a rule for purging all the corporations of Ireland. I have sent for and discoursed the leading dissenters of Belfast, and pressed them to qualify themselves. And they give me great hopes they will comply, and promise to exhort all their brethren in the North to do the same."<sup>65</sup> These hopes, that the Belfast Presbyterians would adopt the latitudinarian principles of occasional conformity, in order to preserve their offices, do not appear to have been realised. For, immediately after this resolution of the commons, the Presbyterian burgesses were superseded by the election of Episcopalians in their room—a procedure which was now sought to be extended to all the other corporations in Ulster. This rigorous interpretation of the act was, of course, highly pleasing to Archbishop King, who, in a letter to his former correspondent, Mr. Southwell, on the 8th of November, thus relates the whole affair:—"The test got a parting blow, for on a disputed election for Belfast, it was found that only four burgesses out of thirteen were at the election; and on an inquiry, the reason was given that the other burgesses durst not act, having not taken the test. The question then came in very naturally, whether they were obliged to take it or not; and on a fair division, the house resolved that they were. This is looked on to be a fuller declaration of the sense of the house than all that happened before,"<sup>66</sup> for they were under no necessity to make any such declaration [of conformity], and it was pressed hard, when it was very late, to adjourn the debate; but on division they were resolved to go on with it, and made the aforesaid declaration."<sup>67</sup>

The impolicy of thus disqualifying nearly one half of the Protestants of Ireland from holding office under the crown, became apparent in the spring of the following year, when the French king made an attempt to land the Pretender in Scotland. Great

<sup>65</sup> State Paper Office, London.

<sup>66</sup> Archbishop King is probably referring here to the previous division on the address to the queen.

<sup>67</sup> King's MS. Correspondence.



alarm was felt throughout Ireland, but especially in Ulster, from its vicinity to Scotland, and an array of the militia took place for the defence of the kingdom. On this occasion many of the Presbyterians refused being enrolled, as bringing them under the operation of the Sacramental Test, and exposing them to its penalties if they did not conform. But though these scruples, which were well-founded in law, were not felt by others of the Presbyterian yeomanry of the province, enough had occurred to convince all moderate men of the impolicy of the law as it then stood. This conjuncture, therefore, was considered a favourable one for making another effort to obtain its repeal, and various circumstances encouraged the hope that it might be successfully attempted in England. Accordingly, the attorney-general for Ireland, Allan Brodrick, Esq., who was also speaker of the House of Commons, and the steady friend of toleration, visited England in the spring, and brought the matter before the government,<sup>68</sup> proposing that the clause in the Irish act against Popery should be repealed by an enactment of the English parliament, as the oath of supremacy had been repealed in the previous reign. To promote this object, the ministers in Ulster drew up a congratulatory address to the queen on the deliverance of the kingdom from the threatened invasion of the Pretender. In this address, after alluding to the loyalty of the Irish Presbyterians to the crown during all the vicissitudes of the previous century, and expressing their satisfaction at the unsuccessful issue of the Pretender's project, they deemed it their duty respectfully to remind her majesty of the disqualifications under which they lay from the Sacramental Test. "We cannot, in conscience, neglect this opportunity of expressing our deep regret that the gentlemen and people of our persuasion are deprived of that capacity of serving your majesty and their country, which they so successfully improved on all former occasions, especially considering the present circumstances of this kingdom."<sup>69</sup> Congratulatory ad-

<sup>68</sup> Swift's letter to Rev. Dr. Stearne, April 15, 1708, in his "Works," vol. xv. p. 269.

<sup>69</sup> "Presbyterian Loyalty," p. 478. I have never seen a complete copy of this address.

dresses of a similar import, lamenting the operation of the test, in disqualifying so many loyal Protestants from serving their country at this critical period, and hoping some expedient might be found for remedying this grievance, were presented to the queen from a number of corporations, including even that of the metropolis.<sup>70</sup> The Presbyterians in Ulster also employed Counsellor Stevens of Dublin, and despatched him to London to second the efforts of the attorney-general and other friends of their cause. But the English parliament having been recently dissolved, and the elections for the new one not yet completed, the government were not in a situation to hold out any hopes of being able to repeal or modify the Irish test in England. The business was necessarily deferred till the assembling of the new parliament in the end of the year. At that time the Whigs were found still to possess a decided preponderance; some further changes took place in the ministry, but no attempt was made by them to bring this Irish question before the English parliament, probably having ascertained that the opposition to such a measure would be insurmountable. Lord Pembroke, having been appointed by the queen lord-high admiral, in room of Prince George of Denmark, resigned the government of Ireland, and the Earl of Wharton, who had long been considered the leader of the Presbyterian interest in England,<sup>71</sup> was nominated lord-lieutenant in the beginning of December.

The appointment of this nobleman was highly gratifying to the Presbyterians, and inspired them with the hope that their grievances would now at length be redressed. At the same time, the High Church party were proportionably alarmed for the maintenance of the test—the precious bulwark of their ascendancy; and they again put forth every effort to prevent its re-

<sup>70</sup> Swift's letter to Stearne, "Works," vol. xv. p. 269; and his "Narrative of the attempts of the Irish Dissenters for a Repeal of the Test," in his "Works," vol. ix. pp. 73, 74. These addresses *followed* the attempt made in parliament, under Lord Pembroke, to alter the test, as already related, whereas they are represented in this "Narrative" as preceding and preparing for that attempt.

<sup>71</sup> Grimblot's "Letters of William III.," &c., vol. ii. p. 321.

moval. At this crisis a new and most powerful champion undertook its defence. This was no less a person than the celebrated Dean Swift, who, amid his political changes, was most steadfastly and most violently opposed to the claims of the dissenters.<sup>72</sup> He now published, anonymously, the first of his well-known tracts in support of the Sacramental Test, entitled, "A Letter from a Member of the House of Commons in Ireland, to a Member of the House of Commons in England, concerning the Sacramental Test."<sup>73</sup> In this pamphlet he employed all his unrivalled powers of sarcasm and irony to refute the claims of the Irish Presbyterians to relief from the test, and to denounce them as most formidable foes to the Established Church. He makes no scruple of avowing, that more danger was to be apprehended from them than from the Romanists, whom he represents as in the fair way of being speedily extinct under the operation of the anti-popery laws. The following statement of their condition under those unrighteous laws, and the confident hope he expresses, which has been so signally disappointed, of their speedy conversion to the Established Church, will be read with painful interest by the present generation:—"We look upon the Papists to be altogether as inconsiderable as the women and children. Their lands are almost entirely taken from them, and they are rendered incapable of purchasing any more; and for the little that remains, provision is made by the late act against Popery that it will daily crumble away. To prevent which, some of the most considerable among them are already turned Protestants, and so in all probability will many more. Then, the Popish priests are all registered, and without permission (which I hope will not be granted) they can have no successors; so that the Protestant

<sup>72</sup> See the admirable character of Swift as a politician, recently given by Lord Mahon in his "History of England," vol. i. p. 69.

<sup>73</sup> London, 1709, 4to, pp. 28. Though then in London, he dated it from Dublin, December 4, 1708. It appeared in the end of that month. See his letter to Archbishop King, in his "Works," vol. xv. p. 292. Swift had thus been tempted to violate an early vow of his, never to write against the Presbyterians: "Pox on the dissenters and independents," he wrote to the Rev. Dr. Tisdall in 1704, "I would as soon trouble my head to write against a louse and a flea!" Ibid, vol. xv. p. 255.

clergy will find it perhaps no difficult matter to bring great numbers over to the Church; and in the meantime the common people, without leaders, without discipline, or natural courage, being little better than hewers of wood and drawers of water, are out of all capacity of doing any mischief, if they were ever so well inclined." On the other hand, he illustrates the danger to be apprehended from the Presbyterians, as contrasted with the Romanists, by this striking, but not very complimentary metaphor: "'Tis agreed among naturalists that a lion is a larger, a stronger, and more dangerous enemy than a cat. Yet if a man were to have his choice, either a lion at his foot, bound fast with three or four chains, his teeth drawn out, and his claws pared to the quick, or an angry cat in full liberty at his throat, he would take no long time to determine."

Scarcely had this clever and plausible pamphlet appeared, when another clerical controversialist, but of far inferior talent, hastened to attack the Presbyterians with the most offensive scurrility, and a total disregard of candour and of truth. This was the Rev. William Tisdall, D.D., the vicar of Belfast.<sup>74</sup> A few years previously, he had endeavoured, by a suit at law, to bring that town under the operation of the "Act for the provision of ministers in cities, corporate towns," &c.,<sup>75</sup> by which a heavy house-tax would have been imposed, in all time coming, on the inhabitants, in order to provide a higher salary for the legal incumbent. All parties in the town, whether churchmen or dissenters, resisted this illegal attempt; and the rapacious vicar was defeated by a judgment of the Court of Queen's Bench, in the year 1706, which he in vain endeavoured to have reversed by the privy-council.<sup>76</sup> This mortifying result he was pleased to attribute to the influence of the Presbyterians, and from that period he became their implacable and unscrupulous assailant. His first publication against them was anonymous, and appeared in the spring of 1709 under this ironical title—"A Sample of True-blue Presbyterian Loyalty, in all changes and turns of Govern-

<sup>74</sup> Is this Swift's rival and correspondent?

<sup>75</sup> 17 & 18 Chas. II., chap. 7.

<sup>76</sup> See a full account of this case in "Presbyterian Loyalty," pp. 484, 485.



ment, taken chiefly out of their most authentic records."<sup>77</sup> His professed object is to refute their claims to "untainted loyalty," put forth both in their address to the queen in the previous year, and in De Foe's pamphlet, called "The Parallel," formerly mentioned; and by the grossest perversion of the facts and documents of history during the preceding century, he labours to prove them wholly unworthy of relief or toleration.

In the midst of these attacks on the Presbyterians, the new lord-lieutenant reached Dublin, and was sworn into office in the end of April.<sup>78</sup> On the 5th of May he opened the parliament; and in his speech on that occasion, after alluding to the preponderance of the Romanist population over the Protestant, and urging still further severities against the former, he reminded both houses of "the necessity of cultivating and preserving a good understanding amongst all the Protestants of this kingdom;" and added, "What the most proper methods are to compass so desirable and so necessary an end, you yourselves who have the opportunities of knowing the uneasiness that any of your fellow-subjects may lie under, are fittest to judge."<sup>79</sup> This obvious reference to a repeal, or, at least, a modification of the Test Act, was conveniently interpreted by the commons as a recommendation of a toleration act, which, so long as the test was unrepealed, the Presbyterians were not anxious to obtain. Ac-

<sup>77</sup> Dublin, 1709, 4to, pp. 31. He annexed to it a copy of the "Declaration of the presbytery of Bangor in the year 1649," as a pregnant proof of Presbyterian disloyalty and treason (see chap. xiv. note 30), and he placed upon the title this complimentary text of Scripture, "She eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness." Prov. xxx. 20.

<sup>78</sup> Lord Wharton brought over with him the celebrated Joseph Addison as his private secretary, but I do not find it stated in any of the biographies of this eminent writer that he was a member of the Irish House of Commons. Yet this was the fact; he was elected for the borough of Cavan, and took his seat on the 13th of May 1709. His name occasionally appears on the journals of the commons during this, and more frequently during the subsequent session of 1710. In the autumn of that year, he returned with Lord Wharton to England, though his seat for Cavan was not vacated until the general election in 1713. I found several official letters of his, in his neat, lady-like handwriting, in the State Paper Office, London.

<sup>79</sup> Journals of the Irish Commons, vol. iii. p. 567.

cordingly, in their address to the lord-lieutenant, the commons willingly admitted the claims of the Presbyterians to receive ample toleration, "a liberty," they say, "enjoyed by our most dangerous enemies;"<sup>80</sup> but they preserve a profound silence with regard to the Test Act, which they well knew was the only point referred to by his Excellency. The House of Lords, in their address to Lord Wharton, would not consent even to offer toleration to the Presbyterians. In a house of only ten lay lords, but comprising no fewer than twelve bishops, headed by Archbishop King, always at his post to prevent any relief to dissenters, they summarily rejected an amendment to that effect; and, in contempt of notorious facts, they boldly assured his Excellency, that "all our fellow-subjects are treated with so much tenderness, that we hope they never will have just reason to complain of any uneasiness!"<sup>81</sup>

It was not to be expected that any modification of the test would be conceded during this session, which had opened so inauspiciously. The subject, indeed, does not appear to have been brought before the commons in any shape during this session. The house had very frequently under their consideration "heads of a bill for explaining and amending the act to prevent the further growth of Popery;" by one of the clauses<sup>82</sup> of which it was provided, that no convert from Romanism, nor, by implication, any other person, should be deemed in law a Protestant who had not taken the sacrament in the Episcopal Church.<sup>83</sup> But though the commons had frequent debates on this bill, in some of which the merits of the general question relative to the Sacramental Test may have been involved, no trace of any such discussion having taken place occurs on the journals of their proceedings; yet Swift, in one of his controversial pamphlets, asserts that an

<sup>80</sup> Journals of the Irish Commons, vol. iii. p. 573.

<sup>81</sup> Journals of Irish Lords, vol. ii. p. 247.

<sup>82</sup> 8 Anne, chap. 3, sect. 11.

<sup>83</sup> There was another clause in this bill (sect. 23), which, two years afterwards, was productive of renewed trouble to the few non-juring ministers in Ulster. By it, any two justices of the peace were empowered to summon any persons above sixteen years of age to take the abjuration oath, and on refusal to commit them to prison, and inflict on them other severe penalties.

attempt was made in the commons to repeal the test during the government of Lord Wharton, and that it was defeated, "to the great confusion of the Presbyterians."<sup>84</sup> But however this may be, the lord-lieutenant appears to have been somewhat chagrined that his recommendation had not proved more effectual. In his speech at the close of the session, he once more called the attention of parliament to the subject of the test in these pointed terms:—"I make no question but that you understand too well the true interest of the Protestant religion in this kingdom, not to endeavour to make all such Protestants as easy as you can, who are willing to contribute what they can to defend the whole against the common enemy." And having observed some symptoms in Ireland of that growing spirit of bitter hostility to dissenters, which exploded in England a few months afterwards in the discourse of Sacheverell, he took occasion to warn all such bigots as sought to inflame the divisions among Irish Protestants of the impolicy of their conduct, and of the determination of the queen and her ministers to protect the Presbyterians. "It is not the law now past," said this enlightened governor, referring to the new anti-popery act to which he had just given the royal assent, "nor any law that the will of man can frame, will secure you against Popery, whilst you continue divided amongst yourselves; it being demonstrable, that unless there be a firm friendship and confidence among the Protestants of this kingdom, it is impossible for you either to be happy or to be safe. And I am directed to declare it to you as her majesty's fixed resolution, that as her majesty will always maintain and support the Church as by law established, so it is her royal will and intention that dissenters shall not be persecuted or molested in the exercise of their religion."<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Swift's "Narrative of the Attempts of the Irish Dissenters for a Repeal of the Test," in his "Works," vol. ix. p. 75.

<sup>85</sup> Journals of the Irish Commons, vol. iii. p. 692.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

A.D. 1709-1714.

*Increase of congregations and ministers—Proposal to constitute the Synod by delegation—Case of Drogheda—Rev. Mr. Fleming arrested there—Imprisonment of the Rev. Mr. Biggar—Proceedings against them quashed by the Lord-Lieutenant—Controversy between Campbell and Gowan—Preaching in the Irish language encouraged by the Convocation—and by the Synod—The General Fawl instituted in Dublin—Change of Ministry—Duke of Ormond appointed Lord-Lieutenant—The Presbyterian Non-jurors again troubled—Mr. M'Cracken in London—Irish Parliament met—Representation of the House of Lords against the Presbyterians—Address of the Convocation to the Queen on the same subject—Counter-Addresses from the Presbyterians—Case of the French Refugees—Tisdall's second pamphlet against the Presbyterians—Revival of party spirit in the North, and especially in the county of Antrim—Case of the Non-jurors—Tisdall's misrepresentations—His third pamphlet—Case of Durragh of Monaghan—He turns informer against his brethren—Presbytery of Monaghan prosecuted for holding a meeting in Belturbet—M'Bride's pamphlet in reply to Tisdall—Proceedings of the Synod in 1713—Kirkpatrick publishes his "Presbyterian Loyalty"—Renewed attacks on the Non-juring ministers—Duke of Shrewsbury succeeds Ormond as Lord-Lieutenant—A new Parliament meets—The House of Lords address the Lord-Lieutenant against the Non-jurors—Mr. M'Cracken imprisoned in Carrickfergus—His trial—Tisdall's fourth pamphlet against the Presbyterians—Further grievances—Synod in 1714—The English Schism Bill extended to Ireland—Fresh outburst of High Church zeal—Suddenly checked by the death of the Queen.*

ALTHOUGH the hopes of the Presbyterians for relief from the Sacramental Test were thus disappointed, they enjoyed tolerable freedom from molestation, in accordance with the lord-lieutenant's recommendation in his closing speech to parliament. Their congregations had now grown so numerous, amounting to above one hundred and thirty, that it had already become inconvenient for their ministers and elders to meet annually in one assembly to transact the business of the Church. It was therefore proposed,



at the meeting of synod in 1708, by an overture or proposal from the sub-synod of Monaghan, that the supreme court should consist of a limited number of ministers and elders from each presbytery, as practised in the Established Church of Scotland. This proposal was fully discussed at the subsequent meeting of synod at Derry in 1709, and was strenuously opposed by a number of ministers and elders. Among these was Mr. McBride, who, through the interference of his friends in obtaining a supersedeas to the warrant for his apprehension, had been enabled to return to Ireland early in the preceding year. He appeared before the judges of assize at Carrickfergus, and was discharged without a trial, when he immediately resumed his ministerial duties at Belfast, and suffered no molestation during the governments of Lords Pembroke and Wharton. He, and the other opponents of this scheme of delegation, drew out a strong protest, containing a number of arguments against altering the constitution of the synod, which caused the measure to be postponed, and ultimately abandoned. As a similar proposal has been frequently discussed in recent times, it may not be unseasonable to lay before the present generation of ministers the views of their predecessors on this question. A copy of this protest, which has been hitherto unpublished, and which is not even recorded in the minutes of the synod, is therefore subjoined in the Appendix to this volume.

During this comparatively tranquil period, the missionary operations of the Church continued to be carried on with vigour and success. In one of their stations, however, their efforts to establish a congregation encountered unexpected opposition from the Episcopalian minister of the parish. In consequence of the notoriety afterwards given to this case by the House of Lords and the convocation, as well as in several hostile pamphlets,<sup>1</sup> it

<sup>1</sup> It was even carried to London, and agitated the political circles there. Swift, writing thence to Archbishop King, in the end of November 1708, says :—" The affair of Drogheda has made a noise here, and like everything else on your side, is used as a handle ; I have had it run in my ears from certain persons." Swift's " Works," vol. xv. p. 286. The editor, not knowing what to make of this " affair," says, in a note, that it related to " some disputes in corporation affairs."

will be necessary to give a full narrative of the proceedings. It appears that there had been a noneconforming congregation in the town of Drogheda, enjoying an almost uninterrupted succession of ministers, from the time of Cromwell in 1650 to the eve of the Revolution in 1688. During the lengthened occupation of the town by King James's forces, the congregation was in a great measure dispersed; and after security was re-established by the victories of King William, the Presbyterian inhabitants who still remained had applied first to neighbouring ministers to visit them occasionally, and latterly to the synod in the North to send some of their members to preach and dispense Divine ordinances among them, until they should be able to support a stated minister. Pursuant to this application, the presbytery of Armagh, whose bounds approached nearest to Drogheda, were empowered by the synod in 1708 to send ministers to this people, amounting to about two hundred in number. The Rev. James Fleming, minister of Lurgan, was sent to preach there for two Sabbaths in the end of August; but on the Monday after he had preached his first sermon, at the instigation of Dean Cox, the rector of the parish, he was summoned before the mayor and town council, and informed, that if he persisted in officiating there, the law would be put in execution against him. Undismayed by these threats, he preached on the following Sabbath, and on the Monday he was again brought before the council, and he and three of his audience were bound over to stand their trials at the next assizes for a riot and unlawful assembly, although the sole offence consisted in preaching peaceably in a private house to the Presbyterians resident in the town and neighbourhood. At the same time, some persons who had been present at these meetings were indicted for travelling on the Lord's-day as they were returning from worship, and obliged to pay a fine to prevent being set in the stocks, while multitudes, with impunity, were really profaning the day by following secular business. The next minister who visited this people was the Rev. William Biggar, now loosed from his former charge in Limerick, who experienced here the same treatment he had met with on a similar occasion in Galway ten years before.<sup>2</sup> Having preached to a congregation in the house

<sup>2</sup> See chap. xxxi., note 38 and text.

of one Thomas Siddall, on Sunday, the 3d of October, Dean Cox lost no time in proceeding against him under a clause in the Irish act of uniformity, which had never before been applied to dissenting ministers. On the Tuesday following, a certificate was obtained from the ordinary, the Archbishop of Armagh, to the effect that Mr. Biggar was not licensed to officiate in his diocese; upon which the mayor, one William Patoun, committed him to prison for three months, and obstinately refused to release him except on the condition, to which Mr. Biggar would not accede, that the attempt to form a Presbyterian congregation in Drogheda should be abandoned.<sup>3</sup> A memorial was then drawn up, detailing the facts of this case, and urging the necessity of passing an act of toleration without the Sacramental Test, which was presented by Messrs. Boyse and Iredell to the lords-justices. These were the lord-chancellor, Freeman, and the primate, Dr. Marsh, to whom the Earl of Pembroke had committed the government of Ireland on his return to England the previous year. It was proposed to their excellencies, in order to an amicable settlement of the affair, that on Mr. Biggar's engaging not to preach any more in the town, and not to prosecute the mayor for false imprisonment, they should use their influence with the mayor to release Mr. Biggar, and to have the information against Mr. Fleming and his hearers quashed, and the trial at the assizes prevented. This proposal was accepted, and they exhorted both parties to mutual forbearance, and hoped they would henceforth live amicably together. After having been confined for six weeks in the common gaol, Mr. Biggar was accordingly released, with-

<sup>3</sup> While Mr. Biggar was in prison, the grand jury of the county of the town, at the October sessions, 1708, passed a presentment against tolerating Presbyterian worship in Drogheda, and desired the magistrates to "discourage such meetings or conventicles by putting the laws into execution." The names of these worthy and enlightened jurors deserve to be recorded. They were—"John Ffriend, merchant, Richard Lucas, merchant, Richard Saunders, merchant, John Barron, chandler, Henry Smith, merchant, Tarel Rencher, merchant, John Sawkill, brewer, Thomas Bodington, clothier, Thomas Clark, chirurgeon, Adam Sweetolow, merchant, Edward Credden, cordwainer, Michael Smith, merchant, Hugh Douglass, feltmaker, Peter Gaynor, merchant, John Souch, cordwainer."

out even the payment of the customary fees, and he returned no more to the town. His place was supplied by the Rev. Hugh Ramsay, minister of Clough, in the county of Down, and by other ministers who were unmolested by the magistrates. It was therefore confidently expected that no further proceedings would have been taken on the indictment against Mr. Fleming; but, at the spring assizes in 1709, the prosecution against him and the three inhabitants who had heard him preach was revived, a true bill was found by the grand jury of the town, being a county within itself, and the usual steps were taken to proceed to trial. But the cause was removed to the Court of Queen's Bench in Dublin; and as the magistrates persisted in defending the indictment, application was at length made, in March 1710, to the lord-lieutenant, the Earl of Wharton, praying him to put a stop to these harsh and irritating proceedings. His excellency had obviously this case in view when, at the close of the last parliament, he had so emphatically declared it to be the queen's determination "that dissenters should not be persecuted or molested in the exercise of their religion." In conformity with this declaration, in April he directed the lords-justices to issue the writ, *Nolo prosequi*; the effect of which was, that the prosecution was arrested, and no further proceedings could be taken in the matter. These efforts of the rector and his High Church abettors to crush the congregation of Drogheda were ineffectual. The members of that congregation soon after presented a call to the Rev. Hugh Henry to become their minister; and, in the following March, he was ordained to that charge, and continued to officiate there for above thirty years.<sup>4</sup>

Soon after Dean Cox had raised all this commotion in Drogheda, a few ill-advised Episcopalian clergymen did their utmost to revive a controversial spirit in Ulster. In the end of the year 1709, the Rev. John Campbell, who was vicar of Killead, near Antrim, and rector of Sego, in the county of Down, so overflowed with zeal in defence of the hierarchy, that he sent a challenge to all the

<sup>4</sup> I have inserted in the Appendix the following original papers relative to this singular case, all hitherto unpublished:—(1.) The mittimus of the mayor of Drogheda committing Mr. Biggar to prison; (2.) Remarks on this document; and (3.) The memorial to the lords-justices in November 1709.



Presbyterian ministers whom he knew to be authors, such as Mr. Boyse of Dublin, Mr. M'Bride of Belfast, and Mr. Craghead of Derry, as well as to several other ministers, to produce a warrant from Scripture for presbyters ordaining or ruling without a bishop.<sup>5</sup> About the same time, the Rev. George Wilkins, another clergyman in the diocese of Down, addressed a letter to Mr. M'Cracken of Lisburn, and probably to other ministers also, challenging him to defend from Scripture the practice of extempore prayer.<sup>6</sup> This latter challenge does not appear to have drawn forth a combatant, but the former one was not treated with the same indifference. In the end of April, Mr. Campbell sent a copy of it to the Rev. John Abernethy of Antrim; and, though the ministers to whom it had been previously sent did not consider it their duty to answer it, he immediately gratified its author by a reply in a private letter. Not content, however, with having at length found an adversary, Mr. Campbell took the extraordinary step of sending, with great ostentation, by the hands of three Episcopal ministers, as he himself relates, a formal copy of his challenge to the moderator of the synod at Belfast in 1710, to be laid before the assembled ministers of the province. The synod very properly disregarded this piece of presumption and vanity, though they deemed it advisable, under their circumstances, to record its reception, and their reasons for declining to entertain it.<sup>7</sup> Shortly afterwards, however, several answers were sent

<sup>5</sup> The following is a copy of this redoubtable challenge :—"I desire you to produce some place of Holy Scripture where there is a command for presbyters (without a superior) to ordain a presbyter, or to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction over a presbyter, or an example of either."

<sup>6</sup> The Wodrow Correspondence, vol. i. p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> This letter was addressed, in the usual contemptuous style of the High Church party, to "The Dissenting Teachers of the Presbyterian persuasion assembled in Belfast," and was submitted by the moderator to the committee of overtures, by whose recommendation the synod adopted the following resolution :—"That it is below the character of the ministers [of this synod] as a body to answer such a challenge, being [sent] to us by a particular person only, and not by any society; and withal there has been an answer given it—by a brother to whom it was directed. And as we gratefully acknowledge the favour of our queen and subordinate rulers in permitting us the exercise of our ministry according to our conscience, and as, especially in the present circumstances of the nation, it would be very unreasonable to do

to the reverend disputant by ministers who had received copies of his letter ; in July, by the Rev. Thomas Gowan, M.A., minister of Drumbo, near Belfast ; in the following month, by the Rev. John Malcome of Dunmurry ; and in October, by the Rev. James Kirkpatrick of Templepatrick. But it was not until the very end of the year that this officious polemic, swift to challenge, yet slow to answer, had concocted a reply to the communication from the first of these ministers, to whom he sent it in a private letter. This reply he published under the title of “ Mr. Campbell’s Letter to a Parishioner,”<sup>8</sup> which was little more than a copy of his letter to Mr. Gowan. The latter, therefore, felt bound to meet him before the tribunal of the public, and he forthwith published an elaborate examination of the whole question in a pamphlet, which he entitled, “ The Power of Presbyters in Ordination and Church Government without a Superior, asserted and proved from Holy Scripture: or Mr. Campbell’s Letter to a Parishioner Examined, being a Vindication of a Letter occasioned by his Query.”<sup>9</sup> In this work, Mr. Gowan gives copies of all the letters which had been previously sent to Mr. Campbell by himself and the other brethren mentioned above ; and he then proceeds to review the various passages of Scripture usually relied on in this controversy, and to prove how inadequate they were to sustain the argument for the supremacy of diocesan bishops which his

anything which might further inflame the unhappy divisions among Protestants, we do therefore resolve that any particular brother may, in his own name, do what he judges proper for us in this matter ; but that the synod shall take no further notice of said letter ; and particularly that no answer be given to the same by them.” MS. Minutes of Synod.

<sup>8</sup> Belfast, printed by James Blow, in the year 1711. 4to, pp. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Printed in the year 1711. 4to, pp. 48. It is observable how cautiously Mr. Blow, then the only Belfast printer, continued to suppress his own name, and even the place of printing, in all the pamphlets he issued against the Established Church. Mr. Gowan was ordained in Drumbo on the 29th of March 1706, and in 1716 he had a unanimous call from the Scots’ Church at Leyden, in Holland, to become their minister, which the synod permitted him to accept, and he resided there till his death in 1758. I have not been able to ascertain whether he was related to the minister of the same name mentioned in chap. xviii., note 43. He may have been his son, and probably was so.

opponent had deduced from them. Mr. Campbell appears to have retired discomfited from the field into which he had so eagerly rushed. Happily this controversy spread no further, and the ministers of both Churches were not turned aside by the irritating distractions of polemical strife from pursuing those higher and nobler objects to which their energies were now directed.

In the previous year, the convocation of the Established clergy, sitting in Dublin at the same time with the parliament, were engaged in maturing a scheme for employing the Irish language in the instruction of the Roman Catholics. After many years' neglect of this indispensable means of communicating religious knowledge in Ireland, it is pleasing to find its value and importance once more recognised. Since the days of the revered Bishop Bedell, little had been done by the Irish clergy in this sphere of duty. Bishop King of Derry had, indeed, employed for a time two Scottish Episcopalian ministers from the Highlands to preach in Irish in the barony of Ennishowen; but this was principally for the benefit of Highland Protestant families who had settled there after the Revolution, and appears to have been soon relinquished. Another Highland minister was employed for a similar purpose in the northern parts of the county of Antrim, who had succeeded in bringing over to the Established Church several Roman Catholics. A very few of the beneficed clergy in other parts of the kingdom had also, in the beginning of this century, applied themselves to this good work; and an attempt was made in 1703 to engage the convocation of the Irish Church in promoting it, but without success. The subject was now resumed in 1709 with more earnestness by some members of that body; and though several important measures were recommended for instructing the native population through the medium of their vernacular tongue, yet, practically, little was achieved.<sup>10</sup> These measures, it may be

<sup>10</sup> Among the causes which obstructed this project in the convocation of 1709, one was the abrupt prorogation of that body by the crown, in consequence of the unseemly debates and personalities of the lower house, and their violent assertion of rights which were deemed encroachments on the royal prerogative. It appears that two of their members, the Rev. Wm. Percevall, archdeacon of Cashel, and the Rev. Francis Higgins, proctor for the diocese

added, were further matured in the convocation in the year 1711, and a few isolated ministers devoted themselves to the prosecution of various hopeful schemes for converting the Irish-speaking Romanists; but the invincible prejudices created by the anti-popery laws, and the apathy of their bishops and brethren in the ministry, defeated, for this time at least, their pious and benevolent plans.

of Ossory, when in London, in February 1706, had mixed themselves up in the dissensions which then raged in the English convocation, and had volunteered a one-sided statement relative to the rights and usages of the lower house in Ireland, which tended to involve the Irish convocation in the English quarrel, and to identify them with the extreme party. This statement was printed by Atterbury, in one of his pamphlets, and was very ill relished by the Low Church party in Ireland. Dr. Ralph Lambert, then dean of Down (of whom see chap. xxii., note 55 and text), drew up a counter-statement, in the form of a letter, which was published anonymously in a tract, entitled, "Partiality Detected," and which was immediately attacked with great animosity by Archdeacon Percevall, but without giving his name, in his "Remarks upon a Letter, Printed in a Pamphlet, intituled, 'Partiality Detected,'" 4to, Dub. 1709—published just the day before the convocation met in Dublin, in May. The High Church party lost no time in bringing this letter under the notice of the lower house; and from this date to the last day of July, when the queen was compelled to prorogue the convocation, in order to put an end to the violent and disgraceful contests among the members, the discussion of this matter occupied almost the whole of their time, to the exclusion of more important concerns. This controversy was partially resumed in the convocation of 1711, and occasioned the publication of a number of pamphlets by Archdeacon Percevall, Dean Lambert, Dr. Syngé, and others, which throw much light on the history and usages of the Irish convocation. Yet, strange to say, Dr. Mant, the historian of the Irish Episcopal Church, does not appear to have ever heard of any such controversy at all, or of any publications connected with it; for the only notice which he takes of it in his bulky history is contained in the following sentence, when, alluding to the death of Dr. Lambert, he says—"In 1710 [it should have been 1709] he incurred the censure of the lower house of convocation in Ireland, as author of a libelling letter; an occurrence alluded to by Dr. Swift, but with no explanation." (Vol. ii. p. 527.) Yet every one who knows anything of Irish ecclesiastical affairs is aware that this controversy forms a very curious and important episode in the history of the Irish Episcopal Church, and in that of convocations generally, and that it attracted much attention at the time throughout Ireland, both within and without the Established Church. It is noticed in a letter from Mr. M'Cracken to a friend in Scotland, September 8, 1709. Wedrow's MS. Letters, vol. ii., No. 90.



The synod of Ulster now followed this good example, and, in 1710, they resolved to undertake this long-delayed work. In their minute on this subject, they refer to the success which, in the previous century, had attended the preaching in Irish of the Rev. Jeremiah O'Quin, Presbyterian minister of Billy, in the county of Antrim,<sup>11</sup> and also of his successor in that parish, the Rev. Gabriel Cornwall. They then proceed to say—"We have had this good design for the glory of God and the good of souls long at heart; but the smallness of our number, and especially of such as understand the Irish tongue, has in a great measure obstructed the execution of it, at least confined it much more than we desired. But now by the good hand of God upon us our number is considerably augmented, chiefly seeing that we have several that understand Irish, we think Providence clearly opens a door for improving their talent in labouring for the conversion of those poor people. And we assure ourselves, all who have regard for the invaluable interest of our common Christianity, will approve and countenance this good work; therefore it is overtured—that this is a noble enterprise, and now it is expedient to set it on foot."<sup>12</sup> They state that seven of their ministers and three probationers were able to preach in Irish,<sup>13</sup> and they proceed to settle the details of the plan for employing them immediately in this work, and for providing a suitable supply of Bibles, Confessions of Faith, and Catechisms, all in the Irish language. But the troubles in which they were subsequently involved by the High Church party, during the remainder of this reign, impeded very much the vigorous prosecution of this "noble enterprise."

This year saw the foundation laid in Dublin of another beneficent scheme for supporting and propagating the Gospel and

<sup>11</sup> Chaps. xii., xiv., and xvi., note 53.

<sup>12</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod.

<sup>13</sup> These ministers were the Rev. Messrs. Archibald MacLaine, minister of Markethill, James M'Gregor of Aghadoey, Humphrey Thomson of Ballibay, Samuel Dunlop of Letterkenny, John Wilson of Narrow-water, or Carlingford, and Archibald Boyd of Maghera, with Messrs. Robert Higinbotham, afterwards minister of Coleraine, Patrick Plunket, afterwards minister at Glasslough, and grandfather of Lord-Chancellor Plunket, and John Dunlop, afterwards minister, I believe, of Derg.

the principles of Presbyterianism in the South of Ireland. This was the establishment of what has been since styled "The General Fund." The foundation deed, dated on the 1st of May 1710, states that it was instituted for the following purposes—"For the support of religion in and about Dublin and the South of Ireland, by assisting and supporting the Protestant dissenting interest against unreasonable prosecutions, (some of which they have lately been exposed to, contrary to her majesty's sentiments publicly declared), and for the education of youth designed for the ministry among Protestant dissenters, and for assisting Protestant dissenting congregations that are poor and unable to provide for their ministers."<sup>14</sup> The trustees of this valuable fund consisted of the subscribers and of the ten ministers of the five Protestant dissenting congregations then existing in Dublin, all being collegiate charges, with two laymen from each; and the vacancies occurring among these official trustees were to be filled up by the appointment of the successors of these ministers, and by laymen chosen by ballot out of these congregations respectively. Large sums of money were contributed to this fund, or placed under its management, by Sir Arthur Langford, Bart., Lady Loftus, Joseph Damer, Esq., Rev. Daniel Williams of London, and other benevolent members of the Presbyterian Church in and about Dublin; and for many years, by means of this fund, the preaching of the Gospel was introduced and maintained among many dissenting communities in the southern parts of the kingdom.

While the Presbyterians, both in the North and South, were thus occupied in providing for the extension of their principles, and supplying their brethren with religious ordinances, another change of administration was in course of being effected, which ultimately plunged them into new and more serious troubles. In the meantime, however, their patron and protector, the Earl of Wharton, returned to Ireland, and resumed the reins of government in the beginning of May 1710. At the reassembling of parliament in the middle of that month, he once more recommended union among Protestants, and both houses once more carefully evaded under-

<sup>14</sup> Armstrong's "Short Account of the General Fund," &c., p. 6.

standing this recommendation in the sense in which his Excellency wished it to be taken. The parliament sat to the end of August, but in none of its proceedings was there any reference to the Sacramental Test, or the claims of the Presbyterians. Immediately after the close of the session, Lord Wharton returned to England, where he found the meditated change of ministry already begun. The queen had removed a few of the leading Whigs from some of the less important parts in the administration so early as the month of June, and, in August and September, additional appointments of high-flying Tories took place. At length, in the following month, the government of Ireland was taken from Lord Wharton, and committed once more to the Duke of Ormond, who appointed the primate and the commander of the forces to be lords-justices until affairs in England should permit him to return to Dublin. The Tories now regained that complete ascendancy in the government which they retained during the remainder of this reign. In Ireland, as well as in England, this revolution was the signal for a fresh outburst of High Church zeal against dissenters. It had no sooner commenced than that party resumed hostilities against them, by once more endeavouring to bring the penalties of the law to bear on the few non-juring ministers in Ulster, who had for some time been peaceably discharging their pastoral duties in their respective congregations. Two violent High Church magistrates in the neighbourhood of Belfast, Mr. Westenra Waring, and Mr. Brent Spencer of Lisburn, acting under the clause of the recent supplementary act for preventing the further growth of Popery,<sup>15</sup> issued their warrant in the beginning of the month of August for apprehending the three non-jurors in that neighbourhood, Messrs. M'Bride, Riddel, and M'Cracken. The former two concealed themselves for a time, and were ultimately compelled to leave the country. Mr. M'Cracken, by the connivance, it is said, of Dr. Smith, the bishop of Down and Connor, escaped from the constables who had him in custody,<sup>16</sup> and succeeded in once more reaching Scotland

<sup>15</sup> See chap. xxii., note 83.

<sup>16</sup> Wodrow's "Analecta," vol. i. p. 291. "They tell a story that Mr. M'Cracken was taken by the messengers, and as they came by the bishop's

in safety. He took refuge at Castle Kennedy, in Galloway, where he was joined by his wife and family in the end of the year. In the month of March 1711, he proceeded to London to lay his case before government, and endeavour to obtain protection against these unjust proceedings. The indefatigable annalist of the Scottish Church has preserved the following account of Mr. McCracken's reception there, which he had received from himself on his return to Scotland: <sup>17</sup>—"By means of recommendations here from the Duchess to the Duke of Hamilton, he got access to the Duke of Ormond. He tells me he was very fair to him, and assured him he should not be prosecuted by the government; but told him the standing laws would still leave him open to the justices of the peace; but when it came to the utmost, he should do all for him he could. He applied to the Earl of Oxford and got access to him. He was very obliging, and desired a written representation of the state of the dissenters in Ireland. This, upon second thoughts, my author waived, being come up only for his own particular case, and having no commission from his brethren to act in their name. Upon the earl asking, why the dissenters had not a toleration? He said it was the opinion of some, but for what he knew his brethren were not agreed in it, that a toleration<sup>18</sup> would not be for the interest of the dissenters there. I have forgotten the reasons he gave. — However, my author did in his own name very much urge the taking off the penal laws to the treasurer [the Earl of Oxford] and showed how these and the Sacramental Test did very much incapacitate great numbers of the best of the queen's subjects from appearing for her in the greatest checks; and instanced the late invasion, when they in the North of Ireland had fears of the coming in of the Pretender to Scotland or to them, and yet not one of them were in case to do anything. The lord-treasurer seemed convinced of the reasonableness of the thing, and promised to

house, he craved leave to speak with the bishop, who allowed him to go down his back stairs and out at a back entry, and so he escaped." See also "The Wodrow Correspondence," vol. i. p. 193.

<sup>17</sup> In his "Analecta," vol. i. p. 340.

<sup>18</sup> He means a toleration without a repeal of the Sacramental Test.



consider of it, and allowed my author to write to him, and promised a return." From another source, it appears that Mr. M'Cracken had also interviews with the lord-chancellor, the Duke of Shrewsbury, and Lord Wharton.<sup>19</sup> These favourable representations, which emboldened the fugitive non-jurors to return to their homes, were transmitted to the synod assembled at Belfast in the middle of June. Encouraged thereby, they drew up a dutiful and loyal address, to be presented to the Duke of Ormond so soon as he would reach Dublin; and they afterwards commissioned Mr. Iredell to proceed to London to follow out, in the name of the Irish Presbyterians, the private negotiations of their brother, Mr. M'Cracken, with the Earl of Oxford, then lord high treasurer, who, when plain Mr. Harley, had been a professed Presbyterian, and on whom they still relied as a friend of toleration;<sup>20</sup> but the result showed how little dependence ought to have been placed on this intriguing and unprincipled politician.

The Duke of Ormond did not come over to Ireland till the 2d of July, when his first act was to remove from his seat on the bench that tried friend of the Presbyterians, Lord Chief-Justice Brodrick, and not long after he displaced another Whig judge in the same court, James Macartney, Esq., with two of the sergeants-at-law. On the 9th of July, he opened the parliament with a speech, in which, as might be expected, there was no reference to any repeal or modification of the laws against dissenters. A circumstance occurred which tried the strength of parties at the

<sup>19</sup> [Tisdall's] "Conduct of the Dissenters," &c., p: 84.

<sup>20</sup> The Earl of Oxford was Mr. M'Cracken's patron, and subsequently employed him, when in London, in negotiations between the ministry and the London dissenters. Mr. M'Cracken, a few days after he had returned to Lisburn, waited on the Duke of Ormond, then in Dublin, and on the Irish lord-chancellor, both of whom, he says, in a letter to Wodrow, "were abundantly civil." But he found he was still at the mercy of any two justices of the peace; and his enemies in the magistracy about Lisburn declared they would prosecute him in spite of the government. Therefore, he adds, "I have written to the lord-treasurer, acquainting him with what is said; and I expect a return [*i.e.*, a reply], according to which I must act in staying or going." August 29, 1711. Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 91. He was able to remain with his congregation until the following May.

very commencement of the session. In the usual address to the queen, drawn up in answer to the royal message, it was stated, with little regard to truth, that "all her majesty's subjects in Ireland equally participated in her justice and favour." The Whigs very justly objected to this statement, as wholly without foundation, so long as the Sacramental Test excluded one-half of the Protestants of Ireland from her service. They, therefore, moved an amendment to that part of the address, but of what precise import cannot now be ascertained; and the question being put, they were defeated by the overwhelming majority of eighty-four to thirty-nine.<sup>21</sup> From a House of Commons who persisted in retaining such an allegation as this, declaring that the Irish Presbyterians were treated with "justice and favour," while their religious privileges were unsecured, and their civil rights violated by law, no redress of their grievances could be expected.

The parliament did not close until the beginning of November. In the commons, the condition and claims of the Presbyterians were passed over in silence, although that house displayed most commendable zeal and vigour in vindicating the memory of King William, and the principles of the Revolution, against the rampant Toryism of the House of Lords. In that house their cause was not overlooked, though it was not till within three days of the close of the session that their lordships condescended to notice them. But the violence of the attack atoned for its delay. On the 6th of November, a committee, consisting of no fewer than thirteen bishops, with Archbishop King at their head, and of only eleven lay lords, was appointed "to draw up a representation and address to the queen's majesty, relating to the dissenting ministers." On the following day, this paper was submitted to the house, and, after a few amendments, was adopted, and ordered to be laid before the queen in the usual form. This representation is perhaps one of the most unjust and undignified papers which has ever emanated from a judicial body. It presents a long catalogue of alleged grievances which the Episcopal

<sup>21</sup> Journals of the Irish Commons, vol. iii. pp. 827. 828.

Church and her unprotected members were enduring at the hands of the highly-favoured Presbyterians of Ireland! All the scandalous gossip which Archbishop King had been collecting for years against them, here found ready utterance. Some even of that generation of High Church bigots must, certainly, have smiled to hear the bishops asserting, as they do in this document, that the Presbyterians "exercised great severities towards their conforming neighbours, by denying them common offices of humanity, and by threatening and actually ruining many who, in compliance with their conscience, had left their sect." Who could read, without astonishment, the preposterous complaints of the bishops, that their "gentle usage" of the Presbyterians, "under many and repeated provocations," had been repaid with evil, and that their forbearance had only increased "the rage and obstinacy of these men." They refer to the case of Drogheda, and Lord Wharton's suspension of the prosecution against Mr. Fleming, as the circumstance which principally led them to address her majesty. They represent the few non-juring ministers in Ulster as "preaching with impunity, and in defiance of the law," though they could scarcely have been ignorant that the penalties of the law had been brought to bear upon them more than once, compelling them to leave their families and congregations, and fly to Scotland. But the monster grievance which was specially denounced in this address, is the continuance of the Royal Bounty, notwithstanding all the efforts which Archbishop King had formerly made to effect its abolition. The bishops now endeavour to overwhelm it with a heavy load of accusations. They allege it was misapplied to the "propagation of schism, the undermining of the Church, and to the disturbance of the peace and unanimity of the conformists." They affirm that, by means of this grant, the Presbyterians "employ and maintain agents, support law-suits against the Church, form seminaries to the poisoning of the principles of our youth, and set up synods and judicatories destructive of her majesty's prerogative," she being, in their opinion, the head of the Church, and the sole fountain of all ecclesiastical authority within the realm. To justify this last count in the indictment, the encroachment on the royal pre-

rogative, they drag forward Mr. M'Bride's synodical sermon of the year 1698, and complain of it as "justifying synods, and making them independent on the civil power." All these outrageous misdeeds of "presbytery and fanaticism," they allege, "if not checked, will in time end in the destruction of the constitution, both in Church and State." They, therefore, suggest to her majesty, that the only remedy capable of putting "a stop to these growing evils," would be the withdrawal of this obnoxious and much-abused grant. This favourite project of Archbishop King was thus again pressed forward under most favourable circumstances, the whole weight of the House of Lords being brought to bear upon the government to induce them to abolish the grant.<sup>22</sup> This representation having been transmitted to her majesty, it was ordered by the house to be printed in a separate form, that it might be the more extensively distributed, and that its calumnies against the Presbyterians might carry discord and hatred more widely throughout the country. On the closing day of the session, the lords magnanimously ordered a volume of the Rev. Mr. Boyse's sermons, then just published, and containing one on the office of a scriptural bishop, to be ignominiously burned before the tholsel of Dublin, by the common hangman, on the ground that "it was false and scandalous, and contained matters highly reflecting on the legislature and on the Episcopal order."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> This "Representation" or address is set forth at length in the Journals of the Irish Lords, vol. ii. pp. 410, 411. It is singular that, after this address had been adopted and presented to the lord-lieutenant, in order to be transmitted to the queen, two witnesses, named Edward Obrey and John Cook, were sworn by the house, and sent to give evidence before the committee who drew up the representation. One would have thought that the examination of witnesses ought rather to have preceded than followed the publication of the many grievous accusations contained in that document. But there is no trace (indeed there was no time for it) of their having examined a single witness prior to its being adopted.

<sup>23</sup> Journals of the Irish Lords, vol. ii. p. 414. Archbishop King, writing to Dean Swift on the day after parliament had been prorogued, and giving him an account of their more interesting proceedings, does not forget these important items—"After this we burned Mr. Boyse's book of a Scriptural bishop. I forgot to tell you we agreed to another address against dissenting



The example of bigotry and malevolence which was thus set by the House of Lords was studiously imitated, and even excelled, by the convocation of the clergy, which, happily for Ireland and the peace of their own Church, has never been permitted by the crown to hold another meeting. In the last week of their session, they drew up a paper on the state of religion, in the form of another address to the queen. They considered this subject under the four heads—infidelity, heresy, impiety, and Popery. Under the head of “heresy,” after attacking the Quakers, and calling for “some effectual methods of restraining them and stopping their progress,” they direct all their ingenuity of misrepresentation to blacken the characters of the Presbyterians. They repeat most of the charges brought forward by the lords, and embellish them with fresh touches of a pencil dipped in the bitterest gall. Among these, Archbishop King did not fail to secure a prominent place for his darling project—the abolition of the Royal Bounty. This grant, they allege, “hath been applied to the considerable increase of the number of fanatical and dissenting teachers, and to the support and promoting of faction and schism among us ;” and they very significantly remind her majesty, that “the body of the nation, in this honourable House of Commons, were so sensible” of the evil results of this grant, “that they voted it an unnecessary branch of the establishment;” so that, if the queen would but concur, there was now no obstacle to its long-desired abolition. This violent and most prejudiced paper, the upper house of convocation afterwards published for distribution, in the form of a pamphlet, entitled, “A Representation of the Present State of Religion with regard to Infidelity, Heresy, Impiety, and Popery : drawn up and agreed to by both Houses of Convocation in Ireland, pursuant to her Majesty’s command in her Royal license.”<sup>24</sup>

These publications, from the peers and the clergy, added much to the flame of party spirit,<sup>25</sup> and of political bitterness, which

ministers and their twelve hundred pounds per annum.” Swift’s “Works,” vol. xv. p. 454.

<sup>24</sup> Second edition, London, 1712, 8vo. pp. 23.

<sup>25</sup> The Rev. Mr. Lang of Loughbrickland, writing to Wodrow, Jan. 23,

had already been kindled by the change of ministry in the previous year. With this revolution in the councils of her majesty, the reverend convocation were so overjoyed, that, in their address to the queen, they presumptuously announced it to have been "visibly brought about by the hand of God, who, in the usual course of his providence, loves then to interpose when affairs come to such extremity that they are apparently out of all human powers;" and they profanely declare that her majesty had acted under the inspiration of God when she turned out the Whigs, and thereby preserved "the whole constitution in Church and State." The Presbyterian ministers and their people saw the storm that was rising, and made all the preparation in their power to break its violence. Early in December, the committee of synod prepared an ample and elaborate vindication of themselves and their Church against the calumnies and misrepresentations of the House of Lords, and despatched Mr. Iredell of Dublin to lay it before her majesty. He had scarcely set out on his mission when the convocation's address, which had been purposely kept private for nearly two months, was at length published. To this paper a separate answer, drawn up on the 1st of January by the sub-synod of Belfast, in conjunction with the committee of the general synod, was soon after forwarded to Mr. Iredell in London. To meet the charges respecting the mal-appropriation of the Royal Bounty, there was also sent over, to be laid before government, an affidavit by Mr. Bryce Blair of Belfast, who had succeeded Mr. Crawford as agent for the distribution of that grant,<sup>26</sup> stating that, since his appointment to that office, he had paid the Royal Bounty quarterly, in equal shares, among the ministers, and expressly denying that he had ever expended any portion thereof "in setting up or maintaining seminaries, missionaries, law-suits, or agents, or in any other ways than to the said ministers."<sup>27</sup>

1712, says :—"Almost all the clergy, and very many of the laity, are more bitter than ever against us, and miss no opportunity of aspersing us, and making us odious to the government." Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 95.

<sup>26</sup> State Paper Office, London.

<sup>27</sup> Mr. Thomas Crawford of Belfast had been agent for the distribution of

Mr. Iredell was detained a considerable time in London, endeavouring to protect his brethren against the formidable efforts now made to involve them in fresh troubles. He laid the addresses entrusted to him before the queen, through the secretary of state, the Earl of Dartmouth, and received from him the usual acknowledgment, that they had been graciously received by her majesty. He had also interviews with the Earl of Oxford and other members of the administration, but he was unable to ascertain how far the misrepresentations from Ireland had influenced their views towards the Irish dissenters.<sup>28</sup> The two replies from the ministers and gentlemen of Ulster, with other papers, were soon after published in a valuable tract, entitled, "The Present State of Religion in Ireland."<sup>29</sup>

These apologetic addresses are most judicious and satisfactory, calm, dignified, and firm, while, at the same time, the unfounded charges so violently urged by their opponents are refuted most

the Royal Bounty, from its first grant by King William to his death in 1708, (see chap. xxii., note 10), and Mr. Blair was appointed his successor by the synod in June 1708. At this time, the stoppages in the exchequer amounted to £9, and his commission of one per cent., postages, &c., amounted to £5 more, being a deduction of £14 from each quarterly payment of £300.

<sup>28</sup> Mr. M'Cracken, writing from Lisburn, Feb. 6, 1712, says—"As for Mr. Iredell, who went to London, all I know is, that the reply sent by him was lodged with my Lord Dartmouth, but he knew not if he himself would have access to the queen; that he has been once with the lord-treasurer [Oxford], and was to be with him again, and that he had ground to believe the queen would not withdraw her bounty of the £1200, mentioned by the convocation. But whether she will fall in with any other of the proposals is not yet known." Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 93.

<sup>29</sup> London [1712], 8vo, pp. 46. This rare and valuable publication contains the two hostile representations from the lords and the convocation, the two addresses from the Presbyterian ministers and gentlemen of the North of Ireland, and one address in reply to the lords, stated to be from the ministers of Dublin and the South of Ireland, though none sign it but from Dublin. The other address from the Dublin ministers, in answer to the convocation, is not contained in this pamphlet, but there is a copy of it, as well as of all these other addresses, in the State Paper Office in London. Those from Ulster were signed by Clotworthy Upton, Edward Brice, Arthur Maxwell, William Shaw, William Crawford, Isaac M'Cartney, and Victor Ferguson, Esquires, as well as by several ministers.

temperately, and, therefore, all the more conclusively. In their reply to the representation of the House of Lords, after vindicating their conduct in the case of Drogheda, and giving a true account of the proceedings against Mr. Fleming and Mr. Biggar, the ministers and gentlemen of Ulster thus refer to other grievances to which they had been recently subjected, and which have not been previously noticed in these pages. "When their lordships represent to your majesty that no dissenters through this whole kingdom have been disturbed in the exercise of their religious worship, where they had settled congregations, either by your majesty's civil or ecclesiastical governors, or by any of the Established Church, we beg leave to acquaint your majesty that of late years the renewal of leases is refused to divers Presbyterian lessees; and in many leases of church and college lands there are clauses inserted prohibiting under great penalties the building or continuing of meeting-houses, and that Presbyterian inhabitants should dwell upon the premises;<sup>30</sup> some whereof have been severely executed already to the great prejudice and expence of many of your faithful subjects, and will ruin divers of our settled congregations, unless your majesty shall see it meet in your great clemency to divert the severity of these proceedings."

To the extraordinary charge of persecuting their Episcopalian countrymen, they reply, "If any of our persuasion have denied their conforming neighbours the common offices of humanity,

<sup>30</sup> The following is a copy of a clause of this kind, as it stood, so early as 1694, in the leases of Archbishop King, when he occupied the see of Derry:—"And the said—does by these presents covenant to and with the said William, lord-bishop of Derry, his successors, &c., that neither he nor his executors, &c., shall or will set, let, or demise the premises or any part thereof to any mass or Popish priest, or to any minister or teacher dissenting from the Church of Ireland. Neither shall, wittingly or willingly, suffer them to dwell or reside on any part, parcel, or member thereof; but him or them shall endeavour to expel and keep from the same, so far as by the laws of this realm they shall be enabled." See Boyse's "Works," vol. ii. p. 134. The same clause was found in leases of the Bishop of Derry, so recently as 1769; by which time another clause had been introduced, charging the tenant with £10 per annum additional rent in case of violating the preceding covenants. But all these clauses have since disappeared, and are not now to be found in Episcopal leases.



as their lordships seem to think they have, we condemn it as a barbarous piece of wickedness, against the law of nature and the blessed Gospel of the holy and meek Jesus, our common Lord. And therefore, tho' after the strictest inquiry we could make, we have not been yet able to discover any one instance of that kind, yet if such should happen to be discovered afterwards (of which we have not the least suspicion) we humbly conceive it could not be justly turned to our reproach, any more than the scandals of particular men are chargeable upon other communities of which they are members. And we beg leave to observe to your majesty that the same apology is applicable to several other heads of their lordships' representation, and particularly to what follows in it, viz., that we have threatened several who, in compliance with their conscience, have left (what their lordships are pleased to call) our sect, and actually ruined them: as to which we are utterly at a loss, neither knowing nor approving any such unchristian practices amongst us."

Their non-juring brethren they vindicate in the following terms:—"What their lordships observe concerning a very few of our number who have not taken the oath of abjuration, is occasioned by their scrupling some expressions only and not the substance of that oath. They have several years ago at our desire solemnly declared before us their inviolable affection and loyalty to your majesty, their opposition to the Pretender and to all Jacobitish principles, and their steady adherence to the Protestant succession in the illustrious house of Hanover. They daily pray for your majesty and the said succession, and observe all public fasts and thanksgivings with respect to the success of the present war. From which it appears how unreasonable it is that we and our persuasion in general should be loaded with reproaches upon that account by some (we don't mean their lordships) who improve it as a handle against us on all occasions." Their views and feelings in reference to the Test Act are thus firmly but respectfully stated—"We must acknowledge to your majesty that the Sacramental Test, of which their lordships are pleased to take notice, is such a grievance as doth in the most sensible manner touch us and all others of our persuasion. The clause

imposing it hath placed an odious mark of infamy upon at least one-half of the Protestants of this kingdom, whose early, active, and successful zeal for the late happy Revolution gave them hopes that they would not have been rendered incapable of serving your majesty and their country ; where the Papists are superior in number to the whole body of Protestant inhabitants in the proportion of eight to one, by a computation allowed in the honourable House of Commons in this kingdom."

It is unnecessary to lay before the reader any additional extracts from this address. In an equally satisfactory manner they repel the other charges which were preferred against them, especially those which affected the grant of Royal Bounty, and the purposes to which it was applied. In their other address to the queen, in answer to the convocation, they notice only those calumnies and accusations which were not to be found in the representation of the House of Lords. Without recapitulating these, or the replies which were made to them, it will suffice to quote the concluding paragraph of this second address, as a specimen of its tone and temper, notwithstanding the provocation they had received from the many insulting taunts and unfounded charges of the convocation. The latter had accused the Presbyterian ministers of uniting with "the disgusted party" of the Established Church, and with Deists, Socinians, and all other enemies of revealed religion, and even with Papists themselves, in order to destroy the constitution of the kingdom ; accordingly, in the close of their address, they thus dispose of this serious accusation :—"That we have always endeavoured to preserve friendship with those of the Established Church, especially with men of moderate principles, is certain. Whether those be the disgusted party of their communion, we cannot tell. But we must look upon it as a groundless assertion that we can close with Deists, Socinians, and all the enemies of revealed religion, nay, even with Papists themselves, to dissolve the present frame of government : never having given the least umbrage for such a wild and uncharitable censure—a censure refuted with demonstrative evidence by such august assemblies as the honourable House of Commons in both kingdoms, who have done us the honour and

justice to assert our early and zealous services against the Papists in the late happy Revolution, to which the present frame of government owes, under God, both its present and future security. Nor are there any people in the world whose principles and practices are more opposite to Deists, Socinians, and all the enemies of revealed religion, and to Papists, than ours are and ever have been. We earnestly entreat that your majesty may be assured that we do, with unfeigned sorrow, regret the abounding errors, manifold impieties, and scandalous immoralities prevailing in the age and kingdom wherein we live; and that we shall zealously and heartily concur with our brethren of the Established Church in all lawful measures that may be thought expedient for our joint vigorous opposition to them."

The convocation, in their indiscriminate hostility to all classes of dissenters in Ireland, did not overlook the French refugees. On these unfortunate exiles they animadverted very harshly, because they had, under certain acts of parliament expressly securing to them liberty of worship, preferred organising congregations according to the rites and government of their national Church, rather than conform to the Established Church, which the convocation insinuated was identical with the French Protestant Church. The northern Presbyterians, in their reply to the convocation, expressed their warm sympathy for "this poor distressed people," under this ungracious and unbrotherly attack; and asserted that the national Church of these nonconforming exiles was "exactly of the same principles" with the Presbyterian, and not the Episcopal Church, "both with respect to the substance of discipline and worship, as well as of doctrine." They add, however, as a reason for not entering further into their defence, "We don't doubt but the French refugees are able to acquit themselves of what the convocation are pleased to lay to their charge."<sup>31</sup> This surmise proved to be well-founded. Soon after the Presbyterian addresses had appeared, the French Protestants drew up a similar defence of themselves, which they published under this title, "An Apology for the French Refu-

<sup>31</sup> "Present State of Religion in Ireland," &c., p. 36.

gees established in Ireland, addressed to all those who love the peace of the Church.”<sup>32</sup> In a mild and charitable spirit, they complain of the manner in which they had been treated by the Irish clergy, being condemned by them without a hearing, and being ignorant of what had been laid to their charge, till they happened to purchase the “Representation,” as it was cried for sale through the streets of Dublin. They reply, clause by clause, to that portion of it which related to them, giving an account of their settlement in Ireland, specifying the acts which the Irish parliament had passed in their favour, and quoting passages from the writings of leading English divines, and from public documents, to show that they had never before been regarded as heretics or schismatics on account of their adherence to the worship and government of their national Church. This ungenerous attack of the convocation on these poor and persecuted foreigners evinced more clearly than any other incident did, the bitter and intolerant spirit by which the great body of the Irish Episcopalian clergy were now actuated.<sup>33</sup>

These violent and acrimonious addresses from the lords and the clergy met with an appropriate champion, in the person of Dr. Tisdall of Belfast, who had already signalised himself as the unscrupulous opponent of the Presbyterians.<sup>34</sup> In the spring of this year, he published a second scurrilous attack on them; and though the Tories were now in the ascendent, he had not yet the courage to affix his name to his calumnies. He entitled this pamphlet, “The Conduct of the Dissenters of Ireland with respect both to Church and State.”<sup>35</sup> His avowed object in it, is “to

<sup>32</sup> Dublin, 1712, 4to, pp. 31.

<sup>33</sup> I have not been able to ascertain whether the Irish Quakers, who were also very severely handled by the convocation, ever replied in their own vindication. (See “The Present State of Religion in Ireland,” pp. 8 and 9.) It is very probable that they did publish a reply, though I have not met with it, for I have found it extremely difficult to obtain access to the pamphlets printed in Ireland at this period. There is a large collection of them in the library of Trinity College, Dublin; but this department of that magnificent collection is as yet very imperfectly catalogued.

<sup>34</sup> See before, chap. xxii., note 74 and text.

<sup>35</sup> Dublin, 1712, 4to, pp. 104. There are copies of this pamphlet, which



satisfy the public of the truth of all those facts alleged against the dissenters of Ireland in the representations from the House of Lords and the convocation;" and with this view he arranges his proofs in the following order:—"In the first part, I will trace the general behaviour of the dissenters of Ireland from the beginning of the rebellion in forty-one [1641] to this present time. In the second, I will descend to a more particular relation of some positive facts, which may serve to illustrate and prove the charge brought against them in the first part. In the third, I will make a further inquiry into some facts, presumptive and highly probable; from all which may be fully discovered the present growing power and dangerous designs of the dissenters of this kingdom." The "positive facts" which he adduces in the second part are eight in number. They refer to the illegal jurisdiction of the synods, and other ecclesiastical courts—the dangerous power exercised by the ruling elders—the seditious principles taught in the philosophical seminary at Killileagh—the offensive objections urged against the form of marriage in the common prayer-book—the unjustifiable erection of new congregations, and especially at Drogheda—the disturbance of the Episcopal clergy at funerals—the publication of many pernicious books—and the case of the non-juring ministers. The "presumptive and highly probable facts" into which he inquires in the third part are, the alleged swearing of the Presbyterian ministers at their ordination to keep the Solemn League and Covenant—their common funds for supporting suits against the Established Church, arising chiefly from a misapplication of the Royal Bounty—their dangerous influence over their congregations, through the exercise of discipline and the granting of certificates—and their increasing power in the corporate towns, until checked by the enactment of the Sacramental Test. To substantiate his charges on all these points, he had recourse to the most miserable garbling of quotations, and to the collection of the most worthless gossip from all sorts of persons, in order to furnish even a

are paged in continuation from his former pamphlet, "The Sample of True-Blue Presbyterian Loyalty," which had, therefore, been occasionally issued along with this second one. See "Presbyterian Loyalty." preface, p. xiii.

plausible ground for his accusations. And, throughout the whole pamphlet, there runs such a disregard of truth, and such a malignant and persecuting spirit, as is almost unexampled in that age of unscrupulous partisanship.

The circulation of these inflammatory papers from the lords, the clergy, and their northern abettor, did not fail to evoke fresh hostilities against the Presbyterians; and there were now, in all parts of the province, justices of the peace ready enough to act against them. After the departure of the Duke of Ormond in the end of the previous year, the government of Ireland, in all the inferior departments, fell entirely into the hands of Sir Constantine Phipps, the lord-chancellor, and one of the lords-justices, who was a violent High-Churchman. He took care to make no one a magistrate or high-sheriff who was not a thorough partisan of his intolerant policy. Thus, in the county of Antrim, for three of the four years during which he held office, the high-sheriffs were all the most bigoted tools of that faction. He appears, however, to have experienced some difficulty in finding persons among the aristocracy of the county disposed to support his views; for, out of the three sheriffs whom he appointed, two had served in that office before. Thus, in the year 1711-12, he was obliged to take Mr. Westemra Waring of Belfast, who had been high-sheriff six years previously, and who was, moreover, overwhelmed in debt, and compelled soon after to secrete himself from his creditors, and ultimately to abscond. In the following year, he selected for that office Mr. Brent Spencer of Trummery, near Lisburn, who had filled the office in the year 1704, and who figures, along with Mr. Waring, in Tisdall's pamphlets, as one of the most violent magistrates and officious tale-bearers against the Presbyterians. In 1713-14, the lord-chancellor at length found a new man, who had not served in the office before, Mr. Robert Green of Belfast, father-in-law to Mr. Waring, and who was not inferior to his relative and his predecessors in party spirit and opposition to dissenters. During these three unhappy years of Tory misrule, those gentlemen invariably placed a majority of their faction on the grand jury of the county, and obtained from that body flaming addresses and

presentments, branding some of the leading Presbyterian gentlemen and ministers as enemies to the state. Their position and influence very much increased the violent party spirit which had been excited by the "Representations" of the lords and the clergy, and rendered more virulent by the pamphlets of Tisdall. As on former occasions, the non-jurors were the first to suffer. At the instigation of the high-sheriff and his party, the grand jury of the county of Antrim, at the spring assizes in this year, passed a presentment, denouncing the three non-juring ministers as disloyal and dangerous men, and calling upon all the magistrates of the county to put the law in execution against them. They were, therefore, compelled for the third time to fly to Scotland.<sup>36</sup> Since the oath of abjuration had been first imposed by the act, and taken by the ministers of the province, several others had been ordained who had not yet complied with the act. The synod, which met at Belfast in the middle of June, advised all these ministers, "if they had clearness so to do, to take the oath as soon, and in as private a way as they can, viz., in one of the four courts of Dublin;" and should any have scruples respecting it, they recommended them to converse with their brethren who had already taken the oath, that these scruples might be removed. It has been stated that a large number of the ministers present at this synod were, in principle at least, non-jurors, and that the friends of several of these had contrived to procure, from the officials in Dublin empowered to grant them, certificates of their having complied with the act, so as to prevent all legal proceedings, though they had never actually taken the oath. But this allegation proceeds from an interested quarter, and does not rest on adequate authority.<sup>37</sup> At this synod Mr. Iredell gave in a report of his proceedings in London, in compliance with the commission given him by the previous

<sup>36</sup> Wodrow's "Analecta," vol. ii. p. 52. Mr. M'Bride was obliged to leave Belfast on the 1st or 2d of May, and retire to Scotland; and, not long after, Mr. M'Cracken fled to Castle Douglass, in Galloway, and Mr. Riddel to the neighbourhood of Worcester, in England. Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., Nos. 96, 97, 103.

<sup>37</sup> Wodrow's "Analecta," vol. ii. p. 67.

synod.<sup>38</sup> He stated that he had been kindly received by Sir Alexander Cairns, Bart., Dr. Daniel Williams, Mr. Southwell, and also by the Earl of Oxford, but he was unable to obtain any promise from the government to redress their grievances, though they expressed great sympathy for their condition, and continued to hold out hopes of ultimate relief. Not long after the meeting of synod, Mr. M'Cracken once more proceeded from Galloway, where he had taken refuge, to London, with the view of obtaining protection for himself and his non-juring brethren against the harsh proceedings of the local magistracy about Belfast.<sup>39</sup> He found that the heads of the administration were fully satisfied of their loyalty to the crown, and of the injustice of prosecuting them as if they were seditious Jacobites. But he was told that government could not arrest the penalties in the act, if bigoted justices of the peace chose to put it in operation against them. They promised, however, to consider how far they might be able to discourage such vexatious prosecutions, and protect him and his brethren against further annoyance.

In the meantime, party spirit continued to increase in Ulster, especially within the sphere of Tisdall's influence. The following incident will show how indefatigable he was in seizing on every circumstance connected with the Presbyterians, and turning it to their discredit in the eyes of the government. At the synod at Belfast in this year, there was circulated among the members a printed paper, emanating from the Presbyterians of Dublin, entitled, "A Serious Call from the city to the country to join with them in setting apart some time for solemn seeking of God, each one in his closet, now in this so critical a juncture."<sup>40</sup> This was simply what it purported to be, a devotional paper, calling the attention of ministers and people to prevalent sins, and the necessity of public and private reformation, and of fervent prayer, which it was proposed each should privately engage in, from seven to eight every Tuesday morning, in order

<sup>38</sup> See note 20 of this chapter, and text.

<sup>39</sup> The Wodrow Correspondence, vol. i. p. 310. He went to London in September, and continued there till June in the following year.

<sup>40</sup> From a printed copy in the State Paper Office, London.



to avert from the nation threatened judgments. When this inoffensive paper fell into the hands of the reverend vicar of Belfast, he detected in it such an exuberant display of disloyalty and sedition, and such a palpable provocation to rebellion, that he hastened to send a copy to his friend and patron, Lord-Chancellor Phipps, together with a most alarming account of the number of ministers and elders who attended this synod. The lord-chancellor, always ready to gratify the wishes of his party in relation to the Presbyterians, immediately brought the matter under the notice of Mr. Southwell, the secretary for Ireland, then in London, sending him a copy of this formidable "Call to Prayer," and begging of him to lay it before her majesty without delay. The prudent secretary, however, saw nothing in the paper to justify all this alarm, and did not even reply to the Irish chancellor. But this bigoted governor was not to be turned aside. He forthwith wrote to Lord Harcourt, then the keeper of the great seal in England, repeating the account of the synod which he had given to Mr. Southwell. This account, having been preserved, though never published before, may be inserted here as a sample of the sort of intelligence by which, in these times, such men as Tisdall misled the government for their own malignant party purposes. The Lord-Chancellor Phipps writes to the Lord-Keeper Harcourt, on the 16th of August—"I take this opportunity to acquaint your lordship that there was about Easter a general synod, held by the Presbyterian ministers, at which about seventy of them were present. They made a formal procession at Belfast, and each minister was attended with two lay elders, armed with great basket-hilted swords; and I am informed some of them had pistols, but am not sure of that. At this synod great numbers of papers of the same sort with the enclosed, were dispersed. We thought it a thing of that nature that deserved to be laid before her majesty; and therefore transmitted a paper to Mr. Southwell with an account of the synod; but hearing nothing from him, I trouble your lordship with one."<sup>41</sup> Happily all this anxiety to incite the

<sup>41</sup> State Paper Office, London. The chancellor's account of the total number of members who attended this synod was not very far wrong, though

English administration to authorise severe measures against the Presbyterians, proved to be ineffectual. The previous mission of Mr. Iredell, and the presence of Mr. M<sup>c</sup>Cracken in London, soon after neutralised these efforts of their Irish opponents. Dr. Tisdall, however, though doubtless disappointed, was not diverted from his wretched policy of misrepresentation and abuse. In the end of the following year he resumed the pen, and published another inflammatory tract against the Presbyterians, with this long title, which will sufficiently indicate its spirit and topics:—  
 “A Seasonable Inquiry into that most Dangerous Political Principle of the Kirk in power: viz., that the right of dominion in the prince, and the duty of allegiance in his Presbyterian subjects, are founded upon the prince’s being a subject of what they call, Christ’s kingdom of Presbytery; or upon his professing and maintaining the Presbyterian religion.”<sup>42</sup> In the latter part of this tract, he inserted a copy of the “Call to Prayer,” which he had pressed so urgently on the notice of government; and probably with a view to justify the importance he had then attached to it, he employs fully a fourth part of his pamphlet to convince his readers how full it is of disloyalty and rebellion. It would be difficult to find a sample of more perverse ingenuity and palpable misinterpretation than his comment on this devotional paper displays throughout. It may be added, that he had now become so courageous as to affix his name to this third pamphlet, and to avow himself the author of the two preceding ones, promising, at the same time, a further addition to their number, a promise which, in due time, he fulfilled.

Another incident, arising out of the proceedings of the synod in this year, will still farther show the dangers by which the Presbyterian ministers were now surrounded. The Rev. Robert Darragh, originally from Scotland, had been ordained as minister of the Presbyterian church in the town of Monaghan, about the

inaccurate in the details. According to his information, there were seventy ministers and one hundred and forty elders, or two hundred and ten in all. Now, the total number was exactly one hundred and sixty-six, composed of ninety-six ministers and seventy elders.

<sup>42</sup> Dublin, 4to, 1713, pp. 44.

year 1697. In consequence of several acts of drunkenness, and other irregularities being alleged against him, the presbytery of Monaghan was obliged, in the year 1710, to put him on his trial, and ultimately to suspend him from the exercise of his ministry. This sentence he treated with contempt, continuing to preach as before, and even administering the Lord's Supper to those misguided people who persisted in adhering to him. The synod, in 1711, after spending much time in investigating the matter, ordered Mr. Darragh to submit to the sentence of presbytery, and authorised them, in case of refusal, to proceed to his deposition, which they were ultimately constrained to do. He appealed to this synod in 1712, and after the fullest inquiry, they confirmed his deposition, and took the usual steps to supply the vacancy in Monaghan. Indignant at this result of his appeal, he forthwith turned informer. "He found means," relates Wodrow, writing on the authority of letters from Ireland, "to go to the church-managers and high-flyers, and gets out from the queen's bench, or some court, summons against the ministers, directed to Mr. Kirkpatrick, then moderator [of synod], for exercising foreign jurisdiction. By the English law, everything is foreign jurisdiction which is not derived from the sovereign. Even their bishops and spiritual courts own their power [to be derived] only from the queen. This is a stroke at the root of all their discipline in Ireland. I do not know what is yet become of Mr. Kirkpatrick's summons; but I hear a man that was employed to summon by word of mouth some of Mr. Darroch's witnesses was cited before the assizes, and he appeared with two counsellors-at-law, or advocates, and was ready to stand a trial. The judge, finding he could not reach him, delayed the thing; though his counsel pleaded much to have it tried."<sup>43</sup> As the issue of this vindictive procedure against the members of synod has not been recorded, it is probable that the government were ashamed to countenance this base informer.

But, not long after, a presbytery of the synod was brought into trouble merely for exercising one of the ordinary functions of a

<sup>43</sup> Wodrow's "Analecta," vol. ii. p. 79.

church court, which had never before been called in question. The Presbyterians in and around the town of Belturbet, in the county of Cavan, had, from the year 1709, been supplied with preaching by the presbytery of Monaghan. In the end of this year, they were found sufficiently numerous to be erected into a congregation, and to be permitted to build a place of worship; and the presbytery resolved to meet at Belturbet, in the second week of December, to give their formal sanction to these arrangements. At this stage of the proceedings, the High Church party, headed most probably by the rector of the parish, the Rev. John Richardson,<sup>44</sup> were pleased to take offence at their Presbyterian neighbours seeking to be accommodated with a place of worship and a stated ministry. Being apprised of the proposed meeting of presbytery in Belturbet, the justices of peace of that district, together with a numerous body of the clergy of the Established Church, met there on the same day, in order to prevent them from carrying into effect the object of their meeting. So soon as the presbytery had entered on business, they were taken into custody and brought before the magistrates; informations were taken against them for holding an unlawful and riotous assembly, and they were bound over to appear for trial at the ensuing assizes for the county of Cavan.<sup>45</sup>

This was a bold and novel procedure, to indict a presbytery for a riot, while sitting peaceably in the charge of its duties, and it very naturally excited great indignation and alarm throughout Ulster. Accordingly, the committee of synod met immediately at Antrim, and despatched Mr. Kirkpatrick of Belfast, the moderator of synod for the current year, to lay the true

<sup>44</sup> I have reason to believe that this Mr. Richardson, the well-known writer on the conversion of the native Irish through the medium of their vernacular tongue, is the same person who, as rector of Derriloran, in 1701, quarrelled with the Presbyterians of Cookstown, succeeded in depriving them of their place of worship in that town, and had several of them indicted for a riot, and bound over for trial at the Tyrone assizes. See chap. xxii., note 6.

<sup>45</sup> Wodrow MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 101. See also *ibid*, Nos. 105, 107, and 109.



state of the case before the lords-justices. But receiving an unsatisfactory answer from the officials in Dublin, the committee resolved to have recourse to the fountain-head of power. In the month of February, they sent Mr. Iredell of Dublin once more to London with addresses to the queen, the lord-lieutenant, and the prime minister, the Earl of Oxford, setting forth the hardships to which they were exposed by this unprecedented attempt to interfere with their church courts in the exercise of their ordinary functions. Mr. Iredell so far succeeded, that instructions were sent over to the lords-justices, directing them, in case the indictment against the presbytery should be sustained by the grand jury, to have the trial removed by *certiorari* from the assizes to the queen's bench, where it would be free from the influence of local antipathies, and more directly under the control of government. Accordingly, at the spring assizes at Cavan, when the grand jury found the bill against them, their trial was removed to Dublin, and they were required to give bail to appear there in the following term. Some friends advised the ministers rather to go to gaol than submit so far as to give bail on such a charge. But they preferred the prudent and peaceable course of complying with the law as it stood, and, in the end of April, they proceeded to Dublin. Previously to the day of trial, they presented a memorial to the lords-justices, probably founded on a previous arrangement with the government, and the nature and result of this application will be best related in the words of their excellencies' despatch to the lord-lieutenant, who was still at court :—  
“ The indictment that was lately found against the dissenting ministers at Belturbet, being removed by *certiorari* to the queen's bench, they are come up to town to appear in that court. And this day [April 22d] they presented a petition to us, wherein they declare they had no intention to erect a meeting-house in Belturbet ; and that since the complaint was made they have, to avoid giving offence, prevailed with their people to remove their meeting-house a mile farther from the town than it was before, and resolve never to give any uneasiness to the said town on that account ; and so prayed us to stop any further proceedings against them. In regard therefore they have made their sub-

mission to us, and promised to behave themselves for the future without giving any offence; and we being likewise informed of their prudent behaviour in submitting themselves to the laws by giving security to appear in the queen's bench, when they were advised to go, all in a body, to gaol rather than submit, we have told them that their prudent conduct on that occasion, and their submission, has given us great satisfaction; and that, as the government thought themselves obliged to defend the Church from all encroachments, so they had no intention to deprive them of that indulgence her majesty is graciously pleased to allow them. Therefore we would give directions for stopping the prosecution, and would recommend it to your grace to interpose with her majesty that no farther proceedings should be made against them on that account; and it is therefore our humble request to your grace that we may receive directions accordingly."<sup>46</sup> These directions were forthwith issued by the Duke of Ormond; and thus this bold attempt to interfere with the functions of Presbyterian church courts was happily defeated, and the presbytery of Monaghan proceeded in due course to found a congregation and erect a Presbyterian church near Belturbet, where a minister was ordained in the beginning of the following year.

In the conclusion of the despatch just quoted, the lords-justices touch upon another topic, which shows that the "Representation" of the House of Lords, and the calumnies of Dr. Tisdall, had misled them into the belief that it was by means of the grant of Royal Bounty, and not by the missionary funds of the Church, new congregations were established among the scattered Presbyterians on the frontiers of the province. Under this erroneous impression, they thus conclude their letter to the lord-lieutenant:—"We take this occasion to acquaint your grace that as we are not inclinable to disturb the dissenters in the indulgence granted them by her majesty, so we think it but reasonable to prevent their making encroachments on the Church, which of late they have been enabled to do by the assistance of her majesty's bounty. And therefore we beg leave to remind your

<sup>46</sup> From the State Paper Office, London.

grace of what we wrote in our letter of the 13th of January last, that her majesty's bounty should be limited to the Presbyterian ministers of the North of Ireland only, according to the grant made them of it; and not be employed to erect new congregations: And we hope your grace will obtain her majesty's orders accordingly." To this suggestion, thus repeated after an interval of a quarter of a year, no attention was paid by the lord-lieutenant or the English ministry, for, so long as the grant was issued from the treasury, there does not appear to have been any alteration made in the mode of its distribution.<sup>47</sup>

While the misrepresentations of Dr. Tisdall and others were thus misleading the government, one or two ministers deemed it their duty to vindicate their Church against these repeated attacks. The first who appeared in her defence was the Rev. Mr. M'Bride of Belfast. During his stay in Scotland, he employed his leisure in publishing a reply to Tisdall's first two pamphlets. As a counterpart to the ironical title of the former of these,<sup>48</sup> he entitled his work—"A Sample of Jet-black Prelatic Calumny, in Answer to a Pamphlet called 'A Sample of True-blue Presbyterian Loyalty; or the Christian Loyalty of Presbyterians in Britain and Ireland, in all changes of Government since the Reformation, asserted.'" <sup>49</sup> He did not venture to attach his name to this work; such an avowal would have been eagerly seized on by his unscrupulous assailants to stir up fresh hostilities against him. To the present generation, this work would prove most unattractive, and altogether unreadable, being not only wretchedly printed, but ill-arranged, without any titles to its chapters, or even a table of contents to assist the reader in its perusal. It will also dis-

<sup>47</sup> It appears, by a letter from Mr. M'Cracken, then in London, dated Feb. 26th of this year, that there was a design on foot to alienate the grant of Boyal Bounty from the Presbyterians, and to appropriate it to the maintenance of Irish Schools for the conversion of the Romanists, and that Mr. Richardson, the rector of Belturbet, was then in London urging this project on the government, with great hopes of success; but that Mr. M'Cracken, through his influence with the prime minister, the Earl of Oxford, had defeated this project. Wodrow MS. Letters vol. xx. No. 104

<sup>48</sup> See chap. xxii., not 77 and text

<sup>49</sup> Glasgow, 4to. 1713, pp. 218.

appoint those who refer to it for information on the history and proceedings of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, whose vindication should certainly have been the chief object of the work. There are no doubt one or two valuable public documents, and a few important details not elsewhere to be found, but the greater portion of it consists of a defence of the English and Scottish Presbyterians, and is filled with tedious quotations from well-known and accessible books, and even these are given confusedly, without regard to chronological order. Although, therefore, it contains many judicious refutations of Tisdall's calumnies and accusations, it must undoubtedly have proved a very inefficient defence against his keen, spirited, well-written, and well-digested attack. Mr. M'Bride's work was in the press in the month of February,<sup>50</sup> and was completed about the end of May. Shortly before that time, he had been informed by Mr. M'Cracken, still in London, that some leading members of the government had assured him that the prosecutions against the non-jurors in Ireland would not be renewed.<sup>51</sup> Encouraged by this intelligence, Mr. M'Bride, in the beginning of June, ventured once more to return to his duties in Belfast, and was soon after followed by his brethren in exile, Messrs. M'Cracken and Riddel, who had returned by Dublin. He found his brethren in several parts of the province still suffering under the intolerant spirit which had been so indiscreetly revived by the House of Lords and the convocation. During the previous winter, the policy of prosecuting the ministers for celebrating marriages, and the laity for teaching school and refusing to act as church-wardens, had been once more resumed;<sup>52</sup> and at the annual synod in this year, the following minute informs us, it was resolved to collect information with regard to these grievances:—"Ordered that inquiry be made who they are of our ministers or people who are prosecuted in the ecclesiastical courts for marrying with us, for

<sup>50</sup> The Wodrow Correspondence, vol. i. p. 417.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, vol. i. p. 426. See also Letters from Mr. M'Bride, still in Glasgow, Feb. 10, and from Mr. M'Cracken, in London, Feb. 26, 1713; Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., Nos. 101 and 104.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, vol. i. p. 484, note.



refusing the office of church-wardens, for teaching school, that full proof be made of what prosecutions there are. We now hear<sup>53</sup> that Mr. Dunlop of Athlone, Mr. Ball [of Lifford], Mr. Winsley [of Donagheady, also near Strabane : these three were ministers], Mr. Mercer of Enniskillen, and Mr. James Ball of Ballymoney, [these were two laymen], are prosecuted. When the brethren go home, they are to inform themselves as to these or any other, get the instances well attested, and transmit the account thereof to Mr. James Kirkpatrick."

In the midst of these difficulties and distractions, the synod steadily proceeded in upholding its discipline, especially in regard to members of the Church convicted of scandalous offences, who were now ordered to be publicly rebuked before their respective congregations. They also took additional measures for exercising a stricter superintendence over their candidates for the ministry, and for instituting a more searching examination into their literary and theological attainments.<sup>54</sup> Another subject occupied the attention of this synod, which claims a passing notice in these pages. Notwithstanding the efforts made on former occasions<sup>55</sup> to obtain a history of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, no available progress had yet been made in the work. The compilation of the late Rev. Patrick Adair of Belfast still remained unpublished, though several ministers had been successively appointed to complete it. This synod once more endeavoured to forward the work. The subject was brought before them by an overture from the sub-synod of Belfast, the preamble of which will exhibit their views respecting it:—"Whereas an history of this Church were very desirable, and all attempts for writing it have proved unsuccessful, which, as we humbly conceive, is chiefly owing to two causes, viz., [first], want of due care to preserve public papers that have been drawn up in this Church and neglecting to collect them into a book; and [secondly], not giving due assistance to

<sup>53</sup> This phrase plainly implies that there had been other similar cases, and that those referred to in this minute were now heard of for the first time.

<sup>54</sup> Thompson's "Abstract of the Laws and Rules of the Synod." 8vo. Dub. 1802, pp. 19-21.

<sup>55</sup> See chap. xviii., note 23, for what was then done in this matter.

those brethren to whom the compiling of the said history was committed. And, whereas Mr. John M'Bride was the person to whom it was last committed by the general synod, we overture," &c. The synod approved of this proposal, reappointed Mr. M'Bride to the work, and directed that he should be assisted in it by the Rev. James Kirkpatrick, who had been removed from the congregation of Templepatrick, in 1706, to be colleague to Mr. M'Bride; and when a portion of that large body of worshippers was erected by the synod, in 1708, into a separate charge, Mr. Kirkpatrick became the first minister of this second Belfast congregation.<sup>56</sup> This arrangement for completing the history of the Church was not more successful than the preceding ones; and this important and deeply interesting subject continued to be neglected, and almost totally forgotten, for more than a century afterwards.

But though this effort to secure a history of the Church proved to be fruitless, there appeared, not long after this meeting of synod, an important work, which has preserved much valuable historical information which would have otherwise been inaccessible to the present generation. The Rev. Mr. Kirkpatrick of Belfast, already referred to, had for some time been collecting materials for defending his brethren against the various charges

<sup>56</sup> Mr. Kirkpatrick was the son of the Rev. Hugh Kirkpatrick, from Scotland, who was minister in Lurgan from about 1686 to the Revolution; he then retired to his native country, supplied the parish of Dalry from 1689 to 1691, when he was settled in Old Cumnock; and, being transported by the Irish synod from Lurgan to Ballymoney in 1693, and urged to return, he left Cumnock in 1695, and was installed in Ballymoney, where he died in 1712. His son was educated in Glasgow, and I find he was a fellow-student in the divinity class with Simpson, afterwards professor of divinity in the University, and suspended on account of having embraced Arianism. The Rev. James Kirkpatrick succeeded the venerable Anthony Kennedy in Templepatrick, was ordained to that charge in August 1699, and demitted it September 24, 1706. While in that congregation, he published, anonymously, "A Sermon occasioned by the King's Death and her present Majesty's [Anne] Accession to the Crown. Preached March 29, by a Presbyterian Minister in the North." [Belfast], 1702, 4to, pp. 16. It is recommended by Mr. Upton, one of the elders of that congregation. Mr. Kirkpatrick was the author of several other publications, which are subsequently noticed in these pages.

which had latterly been urged against them. His plan embraced a vindication, not only of the Irish, but of the English and Scottish Presbyterians. It consequently branched out into so many topics, and comprised so many transactions, spread over so long a period, that the result was a very bulky volume, extending to nearly six hundred closely printed quarto pages ! He entitled it "An Historical Essay upon the Loyalty of Presbyterians in Great Britain and Ireland, from the Reformation to the present year, 1713."<sup>57</sup> It is popularly known by the running title of "Kirkpatrick's Presbyterian Loyalty," though, in accordance with the caution which it was then deemed necessary to practice, neither author nor printer ventured to affix his name. The plan of the work is simple and natural. Having shown that the principles of Presbyterianism were not in themselves opposed to loyalty to the crown or to a monarchical government, he proceeded to vindicate the Presbyterians of the three kingdoms from the charges of disloyalty and rebellion brought against them, devoting, in the first two parts, a chapter to each of the reigns of the British sovereigns from Elizabeth to Anne. In the third part, he replied *seriatim* to the alleged facts on which Dr. Tisdall had founded his special charges against the Ulster Presbyterians ; and in the most satisfactory, but, at the same time, in the most temperate manner, he exposed the gross inaccuracies, and not unfrequently the wilful misstatements, of that unscrupulous pamphleteer. It was reason-

<sup>57</sup> [Belfast] 1713, 4to, pp. 590, including the preface and index. The remainder of the title, which was no unbefitting type of the tedious lengthiness of the work itself, was in these words—"Wherein their steady adherence to the Protestant interest, our happy civil constitution, the succession of Protestant princes, the just prerogatives of the crown, and the liberties of the people, is demonstrated from public records, the best approved histories, the confession of their adversaries, and divers valuable original papers well attested and never before published. And an answer given to the calumnies of their accusers, and particularly to two late pamphlets, viz., (1.) 'A Sample of True-blue Presbyterian Loyalty,' &c. (2.) 'The Conduct of the Dissenters in Ireland,' &c. In three parts. With a prefatory Address to all her Majesty's Protestant subjects, of all persuasions, in Great Britain and Ireland, against the Pretender, on behalf of the Protestant religion, the Queen, the House of Hanover, and our Liberties." It was published in the middle or end of October. Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 113.

ably to be expected that so large a volume would contain important information on the history of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. But the amount of that information is very scanty, when compared with what it might have been, which is the more to be regretted, because many valuable papers which were in his possession have long since perished. He devoted, indeed, a comparatively limited portion of the work to Irish affairs. Fully a seventh part of the whole is occupied with the history and proceedings of the English Puritans, during the single reign of Elizabeth, while, in the subsequent reigns, the transactions of the Scottish Church hold a very prominent place. The work is certainly written in a more attractive style than Mr. M'Bride's work on the same subject, and the Belfast typography is superior to that of Glasgow; but with all these advantages, it is still an unattractive volume, and from its greater length, it must have been fully as unfitted as his colleague's to be an effective reply to the light, flippant, and easily-read *brochures* of their townsman, Dr. Tisdall.

These works proved insufficient to stem the rising tide of intolerance and party spirit. Even the influence of the government, who were unquestionably sincere in their promises of protection to the non-juring ministers, was insufficient to shield them from the violence of their bigoted opponents. They had scarcely resumed their duties in their respective congregations, when they found themselves once more plunged in their former troubles. Mr. M'Bride, writing from Belfast in the beginning of August, has given the following account of the annoyances to which he and his brethren were now exposed:—"I arrived here June 8th, and found my family in health, and applied myself to my work as formerly, which did not a little enrage my old enemies; upon which one of them complained to the government, and desired to be assisted by some of the army to apprehend us; but this was not granted. Mr. M'Cracken came home about the beginning of July with brother Riddel, who, landing at Dublin, were alarmed with the news [of this application to government], and coming home did not appear publicly. The high-sheriff, one Green, who dwelleth in this town, commanded his sub-sheriff to apprehend me; who coming to my house and not finding me,



tho' I was in it, he gave me no more trouble, for he had no mind to see me.<sup>58</sup> Being advised to keep myself private, while the judges who were here on their circuit were in this county, I withdrew till they left the country; and so returned home and set to my work again. But I am upon my guard. Our enemies, tho' very malicious, can hardly get any to execute their warrant. Upon Mr. M'Cracken's return he thought he had made all sure, but found otherwise, and therefore wrote back to his friend [in London] informing him how we are treated; upon which we understand that the secretary to the Duke of Ormond, our lord-lieutenant, was desired to write to the government here to drop this affair, which he accordingly hath done. What effect that will have, we do not yet know; but Mr. M'Cracken was last Lord's-day obliged to leave his pulpit after he had entered; one Spencer, a justice of peace, having sent constables to take him, but they could not get it done. Thus it is with us; but we are resolved not to leave the country; and if they take us, he and I think it fitter to go to prison, and then we shall know whether those [in the administration in London] who profess to be our friends, can or will be as good as their word. Our clergy [of the Episcopal Church] are violent to a degree beyond what they were formerly, and are pursuing people as fornicators who are married by us."<sup>59</sup>

In the midst of these local animosities, a change took place in the Irish government. The Duke of Ormond, though still lord-lieutenant, had not visited Ireland since the end of the year 1711, when parliament had been prorogued, after voting supplies for a

<sup>58</sup> The name of this lenient sub-sheriff deserves to be recorded; it was Mr. Jeremy Phillips.

<sup>59</sup> The Wodrow Correspondence, vol. i. p. 483, 484. To the chivalrous resolution of going to prison, in order to try the friendship of the government, Wodrow very pointedly replied—"I know so little of circumstances that I dare say nothing to your conduct. But I cannot, without concern, think of your venturing on a prison in your old age, upon the credit of such as call themselves your friends. I don't like such experiments of friendship at all, and had rather hear the laverock sing as the mouse chirp. But I do not at all condemn your resolution, till I know better how matters go." Ibid, p. 485.

period of two years. That period was now drawing to a close, and it was, therefore, necessary that parliament should be re-assembled to vote new supplies for the service of the state. The Duke of Ormond, however, was so engrossed with his military offices in England, of which the great Duke of Marlborough had been deprived by the present ministry, that he could not return to his government. Accordingly, the Duke of Shrewsbury, a nobleman of moderate views and of a conciliatory temper, viewed by many as more of a Whig than a Tory, was selected in the end of September to succeed Ormond in the office of lord-lieutenant. At the same time, as the House of Commons had on several points opposed the policy of the court during the last session, it was resolved to have recourse to a dissolution, in the hope, which was not realised, that the increased power of the Tory party, augmented by that of the court, would secure a more obsequious parliament.

The new lord-lieutenant arrived in Dublin on the 27th of October, and immediately entered on the duties of his office. Not long after his arrival, the Rev. Mr. Kirkpatrick of Belfast, the Rev. John Abernethy of Antrim, and the Rev. Mr. Iredell of Dublin, laid before him a representation of the state of their Church, setting forth the grievances under which both ministers and people were still suffering, and urging the impolicy of dividing the Protestants of Ireland by the continued imposition of the Sacramental Test. They state how discouraged they were by the frequent disappointment of their hopes of relief; and they assure his grace, that "the melancholy apprehensions of these things have put several of us upon thoughts of transplanting ourselves into America, that we may there in a wilderness enjoy, by the blessing of God, that ease and quiet to our consciences, persons, and families, which is denied us in our native country."<sup>60</sup> What effect this representation had on the lord-lieutenant does not appear; the only record is, that "he was pleased to countenance the brethren."<sup>61</sup> The probable result was, that though not prepared to grant them any legal relief, his grace was dis-

<sup>60</sup> Tisdall's "Nature and Tendency of Popular Phrases," p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod.

posed to protect them, as far he could, against some of the more vexatious troubles to which they were now exposed.

On the 26th of November he opened parliament with the customary speech, which, so far from containing any hint of favour or toleration to the Presbyterians, seemed to intimate that additional severities might possibly be laid upon them. For he pointedly stated that her majesty had called this parliament "to consider of, and provide such laws as may be judged necessary for the further security of the Church of Ireland, as by law established,"<sup>62</sup> as if, after all the persecuting statutes which had already been enacted to maintain her domination, some new restrictions on Romanists or Presbyterians were still necessary. The House of Lords, in their address to the queen, in reply to his Excellency's speech, took especial notice of this statement, lamenting the prejudices which were fostered against her among the Irish people, "by the restless endeavours of their Popish priests and dissenting preachers." In their address to the lord-lieutenant, they speak out more plainly. They assure his grace that they were prepared to "use their utmost endeavours to disappoint the treacherous designs of the Papists on the one hand, and the bold encroachments of the dissenters on the other; some of whose leading teachers, we beg leave to acquaint your grace, refuse to take the oath of abjuration; and yet, in defiance of the law, preach in publick before numerous assemblies."<sup>63</sup> No such hostile feelings were displayed by the other house of parliament. All the efforts which had been made at the late general election, to secure a Tory majority in the commons, proved ineffectual. The two parties tried their strength on the very first day of the session, at the election of the speaker, the court and the Tories supporting the attorney-general, and the Whigs proposing Mr. Brodrick, who had formerly filled that office, and who had been dismissed by the present ministry from the post of chief-justice of the queen's bench. The division was very close, but the Whigs carried their candidate by the narrow majority

<sup>62</sup> Journals of the Irish Lords, vol. ii. p. 421.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, vol. ii. p. 424.

of four only.<sup>64</sup> This session of parliament was closed within a month. So violent were the disputes between the two houses, especially on the question of the impeachment of Lord-Chancellor Phipps, that no sooner were the supplies voted than the lord-lieutenant put an end to the session.

The pointed allusion to the case of the non-juring ministers by the lords, in their address to the lord-lieutenant, stirred up against them, as it was intended to do, the slumbering passions of their opponents. Even before that address had been presented, the notorious Mr. Westenra Waring at length succeeded in apprehending Mr. McCracken, and having him committed to prison. Mr. McBride, in a letter from Belfast, has given the following account of his friend's apprehension:—"Mr. McCracken, coming home from visiting one of his elders that was sick, accidentally met Mr. Westenra Waring, high-sheriff for the county of Down, (though he durst not appear there to do his office, being pursued for debt which he was not able to pay.) This man, one of our persecutors, meeting with Mr. McC. upon the highway, a little beyond Lisburn, did with his servants apprehend him, tho' without any warrant, and brought him into Lisburn and kept him close prisoner that night, setting a guard upon him and denying him the use of pen, ink, and paper.—It's true had he consented, he could have been soon relieved; but neither of us are for these methods in our case. Next morning his *mittimus* was written and he was sent to the prison of Carrickfergus. Green, the high-sheriff of Antrim, waited on him [in Lisburn] with a guard, and carried him thro' this town; but he did not call to see me. Green bade him be comforted for he would send me soon to keep him company; but he hath not as yet been able to perform his promise. Thus our brother continues, yet he is hearty and in health, and civilly dealt with by all the sober men of the town; having liberty to walk out thro' the town and suburbs as he pleaseth."<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Journals of the Irish Commons, vol. iii. p. 943.

<sup>65</sup> From Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 115. The following paragraph from the same letter is too characteristic of Irish society at this time to be withheld from the present generation:—"It is remarkable that as God



The other non-jurors succeeded in escaping the constables, and secreting themselves till the storm had subsided. Mr. M'Cracken was at a loss to know the precise nature and extent of the penalties he had incurred. Writing from Carrickfergus jail in the beginning of January 1714, he says—"I am yet in the dark about my own case; for there are two acts of parliament we are liable to, and I do not as yet know upon which of them my prosecution will proceed. For if they insist upon the first and bring me to trial, I doubt not of being found guilty, and so liable to £500 sterling.<sup>66</sup> But if they proceed upon the second act, then three months' imprisonment answers the first punishment, and so I shall be liberated at the expiration of that time, six weeks of which are now over. But at the end of three months they may confine me immediately for six months longer; and after that they may tender me the oath, the which if I refuse, then I am liable to a premunire, *i.e.*, I forfeit all my goods and am confined during life.<sup>67</sup> But I thank God, none of these things trouble me."<sup>68</sup> His trial took place at the next spring assizes. So deep an interest did the Chancellor Phipps take in it, that he sent down from Dublin a queen's-counsellor and a solicitor to

hath removed by death two of our chief enemies [one of whom, it appears from another letter, was Dr. Tobias Pullen, bishop of Dromore, 'the great instigator of such as gave us trouble,'] so He hath pursued the prisoners of Mr. M'Cracken. For Mr. W. Waring that took him, being drowned in debt, laboured to get in to be a member of parliament, that by his privilege of parliament he might secure himself from his creditors. So he set up for being chosen by a burgh in this county [Randalstown] whereof Mr Charles O'Neill is chief landlord. But the people being dissenters, he could not obtain their votes; whereupon Green, the high-sheriff of this county, his father-in-law and a justice, returns him, and another chosen by that corporation. When the parliament met, and that matter came to be tried by the committee of election, the return was found illegal; and base Warren was expelled the house, and Green ordered to be committed to the custody of the sergeant-at-arms. But both thought fit to make their escape as neither of them dare appear; and so they are in a worse condition than either Mr. M'Cracken or I." See also Commons' Journals, vol. iii. p. 976.

<sup>66</sup> This was an *English* act of parliament extending to Ireland; 1 Anne, stat. 2, chap. 17, enforcing 13 Wm. III., chap. 6.

<sup>67</sup> This was an *Irish* act; 8 Anne, chap. 3, sect. 24.

<sup>68</sup> The Wodrow Correspondence, vol. i. p. 541.

conduct it on the part of the crown. To bring him within the operation of the English act, it was necessary to prove Mr. M'Cracken to be "a preacher of a separate congregation." But so unpopular was this proceeding, that the high-sheriff could with difficulty find any person willing to depose to that well-known fact. "This prosecution," says Mr. Boyse of Dublin, in a pamphlet published soon after, "was so generally construed to be the effect of party malice by persons of all persuasions, that no man, not so much as the meanest day-labourer, could be engaged to be a witness against him: So that Mr. Spencer was obliged to provide four female witnesses, whose character is sufficiently known where they live; and even his diffidence of their testimony obliged him to procure summons from the judges to several of Mr. M'Cracken's own congregation to come and swear against him. To prevent their trouble, Mr. M'Cracken appeared, and before the court owned his being for the Protestant succession and against the Pretender. Upon which the judges looked at one another, and neither counsellor nor solicitor moved in it, being sensible (as he has reason to believe) that the prosecution was only malicious."<sup>69</sup> The judge, however, had no discretion. Mr. M'Cracken was formally convicted under both the statutes; by the one he was condemned to pay a fine of five hundred pounds, and by the other to lie in prison six months, having already been confined three months, and still to be obliged to take the oath; "so that," as he says in one of his letters, "if something fall not in other way than what at present seems to appear, my life and confinement may be of equal length."

Tisdall, the indefatigable assailant of the Presbyterians, chose this as a suitable season for publishing another of his virulent but clever and plausible phillipics against them. It appeared some time in the spring, under this title, which will sufficiently indicate its contents—"The Nature and Tendency of Popular Phrases in general, with a particular enquiry into those two, which are calculated to exasperate the Protestant Dissenters of

<sup>69</sup> Boyse's "Remarks on Tisdall's Case of the Sacramental Test," &c., p. 54; corroborated by a letter from Mr. M'Cracken himself, giving a similar account. Wedrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 117.

Ireland against the Church and Legislature, viz., Persecution of Protestants, and ranking the Dissenters in the same class with the Irish Papists."<sup>70</sup> With the utmost coolness and effrontery he repeated in this tract some of the most offensive of his former charges, although they had been completely refuted by Mr. Kirkpatrick; he does not even take the least notice of these refutations. This was, indeed, his invariable policy as a controversialist, or rather as a calumniator, to refrain from noticing the replies which his accusations had elicited, and to reassert them as in all respects unimpeached and unimpeachable.

These misrepresentations of the principles and conduct of the Presbyterians, so confidently repeated from time to time, together with the grievances to which they were still exposed, could not be overlooked. The synod, in June of this year, felt constrained to notice both of these matters. To evince their unabated attachment to the queen and the Protestant succession, as well as to vindicate themselves from the aspersions of Tisdall and others, they published an "Act recommending prayer in congregations and families for her Majesty Queen Anne, and the Serene George Lewis, Duke of Brunswick-Lunenburg, and the succession to the crown in the illustrious house of Hanover; and against the Pretender, and against all his secret and open abettors."<sup>71</sup> New grievances had, in the meantime, arisen. The efforts of Archbishop King, so long and so strenuously directed against the Royal Bounty, were at length successful, and the

<sup>70</sup> Dublin, 8vo, [1714], pp. 41. It is a curious sign of the times to find, from a note on the last page of this pamphlet, that Tisdall had been unable to dispose of his three previous anti-Presbyterian tracts, and that he was now obliged to reduce them in price in order to ensure a sale. Though published by different persons, he appears to have put them all into the hands of the bookseller who published this fourth of the series, and who, after giving the titles of the other three, adds this note, "Whereas these above-named books have been hitherto sold at three shillings and a penny, the remainder may be had from the said Tompson, stitched together, at two British shillings." If Tisdall could have foreseen the sad event which happened on the 1st of the following month of August, and which still farther damaged their sale, he would, doubtless, have reduced them in time another shilling.

<sup>71</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod.

grant was now altogether withdrawn by the Irish government.<sup>72</sup> The vexatious suits against their marriages were still continued. Two merchants in Belfast, who had been prosecuted by Tisdall for having been married by their own ministers, applied to this synod for advice, when the following resolution was adopted: "Whereas Mr. Samuel Smith, jun., and John Kyle, both of Belfast, have applied to this synod representing that they have been under a severe and chargeable prosecution in the ecclesiastical courts for their marrying with us, and that they have at last obtained in the civil courts a prohibition until the next term; and shewing also that they are told, if they will remarry [in the Episcopal Church], their penance shall be easy; they therefore desire that this synod would give them their best advice as to remarrying, &c. This synod are unanimously of opinion that they should not remarry; and do accordingly advise that they never do it, but rather stand the suit. And whereas we are informed that this is the case of some and may be the condition of others, we are resolved and do firmly purpose to give our best advice and assistance to any of our people or friends under such circumstances; as also proper support in all such cases as may require it, upon due application to us." The synod further agreed to send Mr. Iredell once more to London, to apply in person to the lord-lieutenant and other members of the administration for redress of their grievances, and to obviate any misrepresentations of their principles which might have been transmitted by their adversaries to the queen or the ministry. At the same time, in consequence of the well-founded alarm then felt, that some of the leaders of the Tory government were laying plans for the restoration of the Pretender, the synod, at the suggestion of the Rev. Mr. Hutchinson of Armagh, secretly determined to take steps for ascertaining how many of their people were ready to take up arms for the Protestant succession, in case any resistance should be offered to

<sup>72</sup> This appears from the minutes of this synod, but only incidentally, as when it is said—"Mr. Lee's circumstances being considered, his support by R. D. being suspended, *as it is from us all*," &c. And again—"Seeing the former way of deducting from the absents from synod is suspended, *R. D. not being paid now*," &c.



the accession of the Elector of Hanover ; and the result showed that no fewer than fifty thousand men, with officers, were prepared, when called on, to venture their all in his support. To avoid suspicion, the synod employed one of the French Protestant ministers to convey this gratifying information to his highness, who "received the proposal with many thanks, and was very fond to hear there were so many staunch friends to him" in Ireland.<sup>73</sup>

Matters were now, indeed, assuming a very serious aspect in England, under the rising ascendancy of Lord Bolingbroke. In the new House of Commons there, the Tory party had an overwhelming majority, who imposed a new grievance on the Irish Presbyterians. The bill for preventing the growth of schism, was, in the first instance, directed solely against the English dissenters, excluding them from the office of teachers, and compelling all schoolmasters, with a few unimportant exceptions, to conform to the Established Church. In this form it had passed through the commons in the latter part of the month of May. But in the House of Lords, when they were in committee on the bill, a clause was proposed, extending its operation to Ireland, which, though opposed by the lord-lieutenant, the Duke of Shrewsbury,<sup>74</sup> and the Whig party generally, was carried in the face of a protest, signed by twenty-eight lay lords and five bishops.<sup>75</sup> When this Irish clause was proposed to be agreed to

<sup>73</sup> Wodrows "Analecta," vol. iv. p. 233 ; confirmed by Abernethy in his pamphlet, entitled, "The Nature and Consequences of the Sacramental Test considered," Dub. 1731, p. 59 ; republished among his "Tracts and Sermons." Lond 1751, p. 132.

<sup>74</sup> Belsham's "History of Great Britain," vol. ii. p. 531. He also gives the majority and minority in the Lords on two divisions, though these are not entered in the journals.

<sup>75</sup> "Journals of the English Lords," vol xix., pp. 715 and 717. The last reason in the protest against the bill referred to Ireland, and is in these words:—"The miseries we apprehend here are greatly enhanced by extending this bill to Ireland, where the consequences of it may be fatal ; for since the number of Papists in that kingdom far exceeds all the Protestants of all denominations together, and that the dissenters are to be treated as enemies, or, at least, as persons dangerous to that Church and State, who have always in all times joined, and would still join, with the members of that Church in their common defence against the common enemy of their religion."

in the commons, its opponents moved, as an amendment, "That the Toleration Act, 1 William & Mary, might extend to Ireland;" but on a division it was rejected by a large majority, and the obnoxious clause was finally incorporated into the bill which was to come into operation on the 1st of August following. Thus was another severe blow aimed at the Irish Presbyterians; for though, by the Irish act of uniformity,<sup>76</sup> "every schoolmaster, keeping any public or private school," was required to promise conformity to the Established Church, no provision had been made for enforcing compliance with this part of that act. This defect was now supplied by the schism bill, and every Presbyterian in Ireland who ventured to teach a school, except of the very humblest description, was liable to be imprisoned for three months.

When the nature of this oppressive and persecuting act became known in Ireland, it still further inflamed the zeal of the High Church party, and urged them to fresh acts of violence against the Presbyterians. The Tory majority in the grand jury of the county of Antrim, at the summer assizes in July, prepared a flaming address to the queen, which was afterwards carried through the county to obtain signatures until it was too late to be presented. In it they say—"As by a Sacramental Test your majesty gave a seasonable check to the prevailing power of faction in our corporations, so by a late important act, you have stopped the spreading contagion of schism in our congregations; both which laws must affect latest posterity, if the prevailing of faction does not break through them." They then add—"It is with the greatest pleasure we find in that excellent act against schism that the oath of supremacy begins to revive in this kingdom, the repeal of which had let into our corporations numbers of those who by the principles, both of their religion and policy, rob the prince of his supremacy, and place that inestimable jewel of the crown in the mixed body of their General Assembly."<sup>77</sup> To this address,

<sup>76</sup> 17 & 18 Charles II., chap. 6, sect. 6.

<sup>77</sup> "Historical Collections Relative to Belfast." Belfast, 1817, 8vo, p. 87. The same party are not *now* so enamoured of the royal supremacy; they are much more outrageous than ever the Presbyterians were in their efforts to rob

which so clearly exhibits the furious bigotry and party spirit which now raged throughout Ulster, were appended the names of Lord Massareene, and his brother, the Honourable John Skeffington, of Dr. Smith, the bishop of Down and Connor, of the late high-sheriffs, Spencer and Green, and of the prime mover in the whole affair, Dr. Tisdall of Belfast, with several other Episcopal clergymen. In various parts of the province, the Presbyterians were exposed to gross insults, their catechisms and other religious books were seized when exposed for sale, and threats of shutting up their houses of worship began to be freely uttered.<sup>78</sup> In the towns of Antrim, Downpatrick, and Rathfriland, these threats were carried into execution, and the Presbyterian churches in those places were actually nailed up.<sup>79</sup> What would have been the issue of these intolerant and intolerable proceedings it is difficult to conjecture; but happily for the peace of Ulster, they were suddenly checked by the unexpected death of the queen, on the 1st of August—the very day, by a singular coincidence, on which the schism bill came into operation. The accession of George the First immediately arrested the High Church faction in their furious career, and from this date the Irish Presbyterians began to breathe more freely, and to obtain relief from some, but not all, of their more serious grievances.

Queen Victoria of this “inestimable jewel of her crown,” and place it in their bishops or convocations, in opposition to the prince! But, *Tempora mutantur, &c.*

<sup>78</sup> M'Skimin's “History of Carrickfergus.” Belfast, 1829, p. 77.

<sup>79</sup> Barber's “Remarks on Woodward's Present State of the Church of Ireland,” p. 57. Mr. Barber was minister at Rathfriland.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

A.D. 1714-19.

*State of parties at the accession of George I.—Presbyterians bring their claims before Government—Meeting at Newry—Send commissioners to London—Synod in 1715—Violence of the High Church party—Alarm respecting the Pretender—Presbyterians agree to serve in the militia—Parliament opened—Bill in favour of the Presbyterians—Tisdall's pamphlet against it—Progress of the Rebellion in Scotland—Precautionary measures in the county of Antrim—The Primate and the Bishop of Down and Connor complain to the Government against the Presbyterians there—Trial thereof at the Assizes—Liberation of Mr. M'Cracken—House of Lords oppose the bill for relieving the Presbyterians—Proceedings of Government thereon—Bill abandoned—Resolutions of the Commons in favour of Protestant Dissenters—Presbyterian gentlemen resolve to continue in the militia—Synod in 1716 approve thereof—Their proceedings relative to the terms of a toleration—Adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith—Resume preaching in the Irish language—Report thereon to the Synod in 1717—Two new Presbyteries formed—Renewed effort for the removal of their grievances—Another deputation sent to London—Their report to Synod in 1718—Augmentation of the Royal Bounty—Proceedings of Synod in 1719 on their Irish-preaching project—Government at length undertake to remedy the grievances of the Dissenters—Despatch of the Lord-Lieutenant to the Secretary of State in London on this subject—Parliament opened—Allusion to the Dissenters' claims in the speech from the throne—Heads of a Toleration Bill introduced into the Commons—Progress of the bill—Debate in committee—Proceedings in the Privy-Council—A counter bill on the basis of the English Toleration Act carried through the Lords—The Commons' bill as returned from England passes that house—Is carried up to the Lords—Debate thereon—Division and protest there—Bishops who opposed and supported the bill—Character of the act—Temporary Bill of Indemnity passed.*

THE accession of George the First effected an immediate and complete revolution in the state of parties. The Tory faction were hurled from power, and subjected to many painful humiliations; and several of their leading men, in the late ministry of Queen



Anne, were arraigned for high treason. The Whigs, on the other hand, enjoyed the confidence of the new sovereign, whose claims to the crown they had so warmly supported, who was alienated from their political opponents by the tortuous and ambiguous policy which they had pursued, and whose religious education and principles had fitted him to be the friend of toleration.

By the various sections of the Irish Protestants, this change of the dynasty was viewed with very different feelings. Deplored by the High Church clergy, whose ascendancy was thereby prostrated, it was readily acquiesced in by their moderate brethren, (though not without some misgivings among the prelates of that party), as presenting a powerful barrier against the claims of the Pretender and the revival of Popery, while it was most cordially welcomed by the Presbyterians, in the confident hope that they would at length receive from the state that justice to which they felt themselves entitled, as loyal, peaceable, and industrious subjects.<sup>1</sup> But, in estimating the results of this change, they forgot to take into account the opposition which the Low Church clergy, now the chief advisers of the crown in ecclesiastical matters, would be enabled to offer to the tolerant measures of the king and his ministry. For, notwithstanding all their professions of attachment to religious liberty and the principles of the Revolution, this section of the Irish established clergy were fully as hostile to the claims of the dissenters as their more violent brethren. And, in point of fact, as will be seen in this chapter, it was the narrow-minded jealousy of this party, and their selfish determination to uphold, at all hazards, the prelatical monopoly of power and office, which thwarted the liberal projects of the sovereign and his ministers in favour of the Presbyterians, and curtailed the indulgence subsequently granted to dissenters within very narrow limits.

George the First was proclaimed, with every demonstra-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. M'Cracken, in a letter to Wodrow, written in September of this eventful year, says—"Things here have a strange face to what they had. The High [Church party] are dejected and become sullen; the Low [Church party] say not much, not being overjoyed; only the dissenters take the liberty of crying aloud." Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 117.

tion of loyalty and exultation, in Belfast, on the 9th of August, and subsequently in all the principal towns of Ulster.<sup>2</sup> In the beginning of September, two of the lords-justices, Phipps, the noted lord-chancellor, and the Archbishop of Armagh, were superseded in that office; and of those appointed in their room, unfortunately for the Presbyterians, one was their bitter opponent, Archbishop King of Dublin. The lord-lieutenant, the Duke of Shrewsbury, was the only member of the late administration who retained his post, and he continued to hold office as lord-chamberlain, and to be received with favour at court, although the Earl of Sunderland was appointed, in the end of September, to succeed him as lord-lieutenant. This nobleman, however, never came over to Ireland, being desirous of a wider field for his ambition, and looking upon this appointment as designed to be a splendid banishment from power and office.

So soon as the new administration had fully undertaken the government of the empire, the Irish Presbyterians lost no time in

<sup>2</sup> Everywhere the joy and triumph of the Whigs were as conspicuous as the mortification of the Tories. (See M'Skimin's "History of Carriekfergus," p. 78.) Similar scenes occurred in Belfast. I have seen an anonymous *brochure*, published there at this time by the Whigs, exulting over the discomfiture of their rivals, bearing this title:—"The Copy of a Letter from a certain Gentleman of the High Church to a Brother of the reverend gown, dated at Belfast, August 10th, 1714, being the day after the Proclamation of his Sacred Majesty King George in that Town." [Belfast,] 1714, pp. 8. The "brother of the reverend gown" was no doubt intended for Tisdall. It appears that, so recently as the previous week, the Bishop of Down had been holding his visitation at Lisburn, and had, as usual, attacked the Presbyterians, to the great delight of the High Church party. Accordingly, the writer of this ironical letter is made to say, (page 4), "It is in perfect torment I reflect how celestially t'other day our right reverend father in God mauled the schismatics, with what a venerable authority and pious warmth he recommended a severe and conscientious execution of the wholesome statutes against them! It is in agony, I say, I reflect on this, and at the same time must bear to have our holy zeal made the subject of their devilish diversions! To think that the schismatics who within these four days were the destined objects of legal prosecutions, and ready to fall fat victims to our Church's security, should this day have the shout of a king among them! To see them t'other day a parcel of dead dogs, despairing miscreants; and now appearing with new vigour and life, so that an honest Churchman scarce can meet their looks!"

bringing their claims before the king and his ministry in London. These claims were still the same; they sought to obtain (1.) Capacity to serve their country, by the repeal of the Sacramental Test; (2.) Full legal protection for their worship and government; and (3.) The restoration and increase of the grant of Royal Bounty. In applying for the second of these benefits, it became necessary for them to state whether they were prepared to accept it on the same terms on which it had been granted to the dissenters in England, to wit, on subscribing the thirty-nine articles of the Established Church, excepting those which related to matters of discipline.<sup>3</sup> In order to determine this point, as well as to consider other matters connected with their present position, a meeting of the synod's committee, which all the leading gentlemen and ministers of the Church were invited to attend, was held at Antrim on the 10th of November. No account has been preserved of the proceedings of this important meeting, but from incidental notices in contemporary letters, and other documents, it appears that, having drawn up an address to the king, and appointed Colonel Clotworthy Upton of Templepatrick, one of the members of parliament for the county of Antrim, and the Rev. Mr. Iredell of Dublin, their commissioners to present it to his majesty, they proceeded to deliberate on the mode of applying for an act of toleration. As might have been expected, they were opposed to the subscription of the thirty-nine articles, as required by the English Act of Toleration. But acknowledging the right of the state, then universally admitted, to ascertain the belief of those religious bodies that applied for the protection of the laws, they unanimously agreed upon the following preliminary resolution, as the basis on which their application should be grounded:—"Resolved, That the first thing we shall propose and insist upon as the terms on which we will accept of a toleration shall be, upon our subscribing the Westminster Confession of Faith." A similar resolution had been adopted in 1709, when,

<sup>3</sup> These excepted portions of the thirty-nine articles were "the 34th, 35th, and 36th," and these words of the 20th article, viz., "The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith, and yet."

1 William and Mary, chap. 18, sect. 7.

under Lord Wharton's government, there was no expectation of obtaining a toleration act; and had there been no Protestant dissenters in Ireland besides the Northern Presbyterians under the care of the synod of Ulster, there would probably have been no occasion for proposing any other terms. But certain congregations in Dublin and the South of Ireland, not exceeding ten in number, whose ministers had been educated among the English dissenters, were averse to subscribing the Westminster Confession, though willing to assent to the thirty-nine articles, as practised in England, but they deemed it more becoming the independent position which the Irish dissenters occupied, that a formula, including only a few fundamental doctrines, should be drawn out by themselves, and that they should be required to subscribe only this brief creed. Though there were no representatives from any of these southern congregations present at this meeting at Antrim, yet, probably, in deference to their views, the meeting proceeded to prepare a special formula to be substituted in room of the Westminster Confession, in case subscription to the latter should not be accepted by the government. It was, indeed, afterwards surmised that this step was taken at the instigation of some of the northern ministers, who, it was alleged, had already imbibed that hostility to the Westminster Confession which they soon after openly avowed and defended. But whatever motives may have influenced the meeting, a second resolution was adopted by them, declaring that, should their proposal to subscribe the Westminster Confession not be accepted as the basis of a toleration act for Ireland, they were ready to subscribe the following formula:—"I profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God, the true God, and in God the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. I believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by Divine inspiration, and that they are a perfect rule of Christian faith and practice. And pursuant to this belief, I agree to all the doctrines common to the Protestant Churches at home and abroad." The meeting also instructed their commissioners, when in London, to wait on the new lord-lieutenant, the Earl of Sunderland, and to press on



him the repeal of the Test Act, and the other grievances to which the Presbyterians were still exposed.

Early in the following year, these gentlemen proceeded to London, where they were detained for several months. At the suggestion of their English friends, they drew out a representation of their grievances, which, when translated into French—the only foreign language understood by the king—they presented to his majesty, who, as they afterwards reported to the synod, “received them graciously, and appeared sensibly concerned when he read the representation.” Owing to the indisposition of the Earl of Sunderland, their interview with him was long delayed. When it did take place, he expressed his sympathy for the discouragements under which such firm friends of the house of Hanover had so long lain, and his willingness to concur in endeavouring to relieve them from their more pressing difficulties; but he intimated to them that, owing to the press of public business, there was little hope of their case being taken into consideration for some time to come. Among the grievances which they laid before him, they directed his attention to the arbitrary clauses in all the bishops’ leases in Ulster, which prohibited the tenantry from permitting any dissenting minister to reside on their tenements, and which had been recently put into execution against some of their brethren; but his Excellency declared his inability to afford them any relief from this hardship.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the grant of Royal Bounty was promptly renewed, and hopes were held out that, in a short time, an augmentation to its amount would be placed by his majesty on the civil list for England.

These results of their visit to London in the spring of this year were duly reported to the synod at its annual meeting at Antrim in the end of June. In the confident hope that they would now at length be fully protected in the exercise of their discipline, and the extension of their Church, the members composing this synod proceeded vigorously in their home missionary work. They had now no fewer than twenty newly-erected con-

<sup>4</sup> See a copy of this persecuting clause in note 30, chap. xxiii.

gregations on the missionary fund, and the sum of nearly two hundred and fifty pounds was apportioned on the several presbyteries, and distributed among these congregations, in sums varying from two up to thirty-five pounds annually. But, at the same time, it was deemed expedient to check the unnecessary multiplication of new congregations, and to lay down certain rules to be observed in future erections. And, in order to ensure a punctual observance of these and other directions of the supreme court, it was ordered that all presbyteries should publicly read over the official copy of the proceedings of each synod, statutely furnished them in writing by the synod's clerk, at their first meeting after its receipt, and insert in their minutes all such rules or orders as related to their own affairs; and the provincial synods were charged, when revising the books of the several presbyteries under their care, to see that this order was fully obeyed.

This synod also spent some time in considering the state and prospects of religion throughout the province. A committee, appointed to confer together on this important subject, submitted to the meeting a long and interesting paper, which was read, and afterwards referred to the presbyteries to report their opinion thereon to the next synod. This paper, entitled "An Enquiry into the State of Religion, the Causes of its Present Decay, with some proposals for reviving it," was altogether practical, and, therefore, it might have been expected, would have met with general acceptance. But it was objected to by many of the brethren as partial and latitudinarian. They looked upon it as manifesting an undue desire to find fault with the forms of worship and modes of thinking prevalent among Presbyterians, and to treat with unseasonable tenderness, if not with approbation, some of the rites and usages of the Established Church. It consequently met with less favour than it deserved from the majority of the presbyteries, and was subsequently withdrawn without having been sanctioned by the synod. It was afterwards appealed to in the discussions respecting non-subscription, as an evidence of that dissatisfaction with the established order and constitution of the Presbyterian Church, and that love of innovation prevalent among certain of the younger ministers of the

synod, who were reputed to be its authors, which, in a few years, involved the Church in bitter and protracted controversy. It is important to notice, however, that this paper cannot be charged with betraying any doctrinal unsoundness, or any indifference to the value and importance of the essential truths of the Gospel. Thus, after lamenting the unhappy prevalence of schism and of party spirit among professing Christians, it is truly and forcibly remarked—"From this fountain have flowed gross fundamental errors in doctrine, as it has been always observed that schisms have issued in heresies; and they are now become so many and so generally spread among us, that they may be justly accounted a distinct and very great cause of the decay of religion. Arminianism was the first gross error that broke in upon the purity of the Protestant doctrine under the reign of King James the First, and it has since been still more deeply rooted and more universally entertained. And as evil men and seducers wax worse and worse by the just and awful judgment of God, and by the natural tendency of Arminianism itself, this has been the occasion of abominable heresies, such as the Socinian, and some are arrived even at Infidelity and Atheism. Quakerism has also been much spread. Some of the exploded tenets of Popery have been revived, such as the priest's power of forgiving sins, that the Eucharist is a real sacrifice, and the necessity of ordination by bishops in lineal succession, in order to the validity of public ministrations, which hath been of late maintained by some, and is a principle of the same spirit and tendency."<sup>5</sup>

These tractarian doctrines, as they would now be called, had latterly become prevalent among the High Church clergy in Ulster; and this circumstance concurred with other causes in rendering them still more dissatisfied with the new order of things in the state. Their favourite political dogma of the divine, indefeasible right of hereditary monarchy, had received a second refutation in the accession of a king upon a mere parliamentary title; and, what offended them most of all, they were required to swear allegiance to a sovereign who was not even a prelatist,

<sup>5</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod for 1715.

who had received only spurious sacraments from an unauthorised ministry, and who had furthermore embraced the shocking heresy that Presbyterians were true Protestants, and as such entitled to public protection. Hence it was that this party in the establishment preached the peculiar doctrines of their faction at this crisis with extraordinary and ill-timed zeal. They sounded the well-known alarm, that by the accession of such a sovereign as George the First, the Church was in danger. They preached against Lutheranism as worse than Popery, and, as Archbishop King testifies, they "prepared the people to expect nothing less than the subversion of the constitution, the destruction of the hierarchy, the abolishing the liturgy, and setting up presbytery."<sup>6</sup> These extreme views had gained the ascendancy in Dublin College, assuming there chiefly a political direction. Disloyal toasts were publicly drunk, seditious writings were circulated; and to so great a height did this Jacobite spirit rise, that Archbishop King, as visitor, acting upon the sworn depositions of various parties, was compelled, in the end of May, to advise the crown to postpone for this year the impending election of fellows and scholars, which was accordingly done.<sup>7</sup>

This vigilance and precaution on the part of the government were amply justified by the critical state of the kingdom at this period. The Pretender was well known by the authorities to be making every effort in his power to organise an invasion. His adherents had already begun to bestir themselves in England, and confidential agents from France were endeavouring to stir up the people both in Scotland and Ireland to declare in his

<sup>6</sup> King's MS. Correspondence. Letter to Dr. Charlett, April 20, 1715.

<sup>7</sup> The following note, in the "Dublin University Calendar" for 1834, p. 75, furnishes the only reason for this unusual exercise of the royal prerogative which the college authorities have been pleased to publish:—"The postponement of this year's election," they say, "arose from a student having been punished for defending the murder of Charles I., which the government (then Whigs) conceived to be a proof of the Jacobitism of the college, and, therefore, inhibited all elections for that year." As I have stated in the text, far more serious causes than the paltry one here assigned occasioned this order.



favour. Early in the month of July, the king announced to the English parliament that he had received certain intelligence of a threatened invasion by the Pretender, and measures were promptly taken to secure the kingdom against so deplorable a calamity. In Ireland, the lords-justices exerted themselves to place the country in a posture of defence; and as it was calculated that the Pretender might possibly land in the northern parts of Ulster,<sup>8</sup> every effort was made by them to secure this province. They resolved to call out the militia, and to appoint commissioners of array, as they were called, in each county, whose office it was to visit every parish, to call before them all able-bodied Protestants capable of bearing arms, and enrol them for that service. This proposed measure placed the members of the Presbyterian Church in a very embarrassing position. If they entered the militia, whether as officers, or even as privates, and received pay from the crown, they exposed themselves to the penalties of nonconformity under the Sacramental Test Act. On the other hand, if they refused to enter the service, they exposed themselves to what they no doubt dreaded more than civil penalties—the charge of basely deserting their sovereign and their country in the time of danger. In this perplexity, a meeting of gentlemen from various parts of the province met at Belfast, in the first week of August, to consider what course they should adopt. They were assisted in their deliberations by several of the leading ministers, and the determination to which they came was to come forward at all hazards in defence of their religion and liberties, and to brave the penalties of the law, in the hope that the government would take steps to protect them from these penalties, and employ them in such military offices as they might be qualified to hold. This resolution was communicated to

<sup>8</sup> It may seem strange that there should be any probability of the Pretender landing among the northern Presbyterians in preference to the southern or western Romanists. But, not to speak of the vicinity of Ulster to Scotland, he had been led to believe by his agents, who visited the three kingdoms in 1707 and 1708, that the Presbyterians of Ulster were favourable to his cause. This preposterous statement may be found in Hooke's "Secret History of his Negotiations," pp. 44 and 120.

William Conolly, Esquire, member of parliament for the county of Derry, a gentleman of great talents and high in the confidence of the present government, in a letter signed by Arthur Maxwell, Edward Brice, and John Harvey, Esquires, in the name of the gentlemen and ministers then assembled at Belfast. Mr. Conolly, then in Dublin, lost no time in communicating this letter, in the first instance, to the lords-justices, and afterwards to the lord-lieutenant in London, urging his Excellency to accept of the offer therein made, "since it's a matter of so great consequence to his majesty's service, for the zeal and steadiness of the Protestant dissenters may with great safety be confided in. I know," Mr. Conolly added, "that they depend chiefly on your Excellency's care and protection to screen them from that act of parliament, which is in itself so cruel as well as unjust towards the dissenters, and contrived to weaken the succession as it now stands. They want arms and ammunition in the North, and when they are supplied they will be able to make a noble stand against the Pretender and all his adherents."<sup>9</sup> This seasonable advice was immediately acted upon by the government, and an assurance was given that, at an early meeting of the Irish parliament, steps would be taken to protect the Presbyterian officers and soldiers from the penalties of the Test Act.

The critical circumstances in which Ireland was now placed rendered it necessary that the government should be committed to more experienced and energetic hands than those who now held it under the Earl of Sunderland. Accordingly, the Duke of Grafton and the Earl of Galway, a general in the army, were appointed to be lords-justices; and their commission happened to be dated on the very same day [September 6th,] on which the Earl of Mar raised the standard of rebellion in the North of Scotland. On the 1st of November, they were sworn into office, and, on the 12th, they opened the session of the new parliament, the elections for which had taken place in the autumn. The Whigs had again a large majority in the House of Commons, and Mr. Conolly, the friend of toleration and of the dissenters, was

<sup>9</sup> State Paper Office, London.

unanimously elected speaker. Pursuant to the promises held out to the Presbyterians, the government, on the 15th, introduced into the commons a bill "for the further security of his majesty's person and government," &c., which contained a clause indemnifying such Presbyterians as had accepted commissions in the militia, or acted as commissioners of array, from the penalties they had incurred, exempting dissenters in the militia from these penalties for all time coming, and extending a similar exemption to those who served in the regular army for ten years.<sup>10</sup> It was favourably received, and passed without opposition, though with some delay, through its several stages. While under the consideration of the commons, that unwearied opponent of the Presbyterians, Dr. Tisdall, published another violent pamphlet, with the express view of defeating even this limited measure of relief. Its title is, "The Case of the Sacramental Test, stated and argued, particularly with relation to the Presbyterians of Ireland; humbly submitted to the consideration of the nobility and gentry of this kingdom."<sup>11</sup> This inveterate libeller, unmoved by the crushing exposures which his calumnies and falsehoods had received from the Rev. Messrs. Boyse, Kirkpatrick, and McBride, retails in this tract most of his former charges against the Presbyterians, and opposes the relaxation of the Sacramental Test Act in their favour, with his characteristic rancour and insolence. The following extract affords a fair specimen of his

<sup>10</sup> State Paper Office, London. See also "The Wodrow Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 157.

<sup>11</sup> Dublin, 8vo, 1715, pp. 56. Nearly the whole of Tisdall's preface to this pamphlet was republished, in the year 1732, in a Dublin periodical paper called "The Correspondent," in which it formed the commencement of a tract in reply to Abernethy's "Nature and Consequences of the Sacramental Test;" in the conclusion of which was also inserted a letter taken entire from Tisdall's pamphlet, pages 30, 31. The whole of this tract, as it stood in the "Correspondent," has been claimed for Swift, and has been republished in his works, under the title of "A Narrative of the several attempts which the Dissenters of Ireland have made for a Repeal of the Sacramental Test." See Scott's edition of Swift's works, vol. ix., page 71, &c. Yet the greater portion of it had thus been published by Tisdall nearly thirty years previously! Dr. Tisdall died in 1735.

spirit :—" It is evident that all the springs and wheels in their ecclesiastical machines are at work towards erecting the discipline of the kirk upon the ruins of the Church, and that nothing has retarded that motion but the Sacramental Test : And in truth it is neither that will stop them, considering the bold advances they have hitherto made. And, therefore, we may argue *a fortiori*, if the Presbyterians of Ireland have been so active and made such large strides, when clogged with a dead weight of this law which excludes them from civil and military power, with what vigour will they spring upon the Church, were that law repealed and were these invaders armed with the two-edged sword of civil and military power.—Pliny observes that the lion, however wild by nature, may be made so tame and familiar that he will lick a man's hand ; but if his rough tongue chance to draw blood, he is so ravished with the taste that he grows outrageous and ungovernable, and is apt to seize his keepers. In like manner the Presbyterians, however sullen or perverse by nature or education, may by proper means be made so tractable and submissive that they will lick and fawn upon their master ; but if they insinuate so far as to taste of the sweet power, they will not only turn upon their masters, but, if they find themselves superior in power, will admit of no restraint."<sup>12</sup> In the latter part of this tract, he again resorted to the artifice of professing to found his arguments on certain matters of fact, which subsequent examination proved to be either wholly unfounded or grossly exaggerated.<sup>13</sup> His comments on one of these alleged facts are worthy of notice. It appears that, at the recent elections in Ulster, the party question on which the claims of the

<sup>12</sup> Page 27.

<sup>13</sup> Tisdall's tract was ably answered by the Rev. Mr. Boyse of Dublin, in an anonymous pamphlet, subsequently reprinted in the second volume of his collected works, entitled, " Remarks on a Pamphlet published by William Tisdall, D.D., and intituled, ' The Case of the Sacramental Test stated and argued,' " Dub. 1716, 12mo, pp. 63. This tract on the Test appears to have exhausted the controversial energies of Tisdall ; for though he lived nearly twenty years afterwards, I cannot find that he published anything besides the five pamphlets against the Irish Presbyterians, already mentioned in previous notes.



candidates turned, was the repeal of the Sacramental Test. In the county of Antrim, the Whig candidate was Mr. Upton of Templepatrick, an elder of the Presbyterian Church, and his opponent was a high Tory, pledged to uphold the test, and supported by the bishop and the leading noblemen and gentry of the county. Under these circumstances, and on a question so deeply affecting themselves, it was very natural that the Presbyterian tenantry should support Mr. Upton, even in opposition to their own landlords, when hostile to their political emancipation; and so zealously did they exert themselves in his favour, that they carried his election by a triumphant majority. On this success the mortified pamphleteer thus comments:—"I presume it can be no secret at this time to say, that the teachers and elders of the kirk upon our late elections in the province of Ulster, have been able to spirit up the Presbyterian tenants to oppose their Church landlords who would not promise to repeal the Test, or whom they suspected were inclinable to preserve it, and this abstracted from all other party opinions and disputes. The ferment was raised so high that no importunities could prevail upon the generality of such tenants to be directed by their landlords, however precarious their tenures were, or whatever obligations they lay under to their landlords. This project, it must be presumed, had been the subject of their deliberations in presbyteries and synods, as it afterwards became matter of their popular harangues even from the pulpit; insomuch that matters are come to that pass in several parts of Ulster, that the gentlemen of the Church, even in their own towns and estates, are obliged to apply to dissenting teachers and elders for the interest and voices of their own tenants."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Page 48. Verily "there is no new thing under the sun." If for *Presbyterians*, in the above paragraph, we read *Romanists*, and for *dissenting teachers* we read *Popish priests*, and for *repeal of the test* we read *repeal of the anti-Catholic oath*, and for *Ulster* we read *Munster*, this account of electioneering results in the beginning of the last century will accurately describe analogous results in the beginning of the present one. And no wonder, for similar causes will ever continue to produce similar effects. What the Presbyterian ministers and people of the county of Antrim, deprived of

This pamphlet appeared in the end of November, but, in spite of all its sophistries and calumnies, the clause for partially repealing the Test made its way successfully through the House of Commons, and, on the 4th of February 1716, it was laid before the lords-justices for transmission to London in the usual form. In the meantime, the rebellion in Scotland had assumed a more formidable aspect, by the arrival of the Pretender, who landed at Aberdeen in the end of December. During the month of January, the lords-justices issued several proclamations requiring all sheriffs and magistrates to seize the arms of suspected persons, and to exercise the utmost vigilance in order to prevent any movements in favour of the Pretender. These orders were strictly executed, especially in the northern parts of the county of Antrim, where the influence of the Earl of Antrim, then in prison in Dublin as a disaffected person, was very considerable, and where an attempt had already been made by the Jacobites to effect a rising. Under these orders, in the first week of February, the houses of two of the Episcopal clergy, not far from Ballintoy, were searched in legal form, the one for arms, and the other for a suspected person. The Rev. John Porter, Presbyterian minister at Bushmills, had accompanied the sub-sheriff, at his request, along the public road, when on his way to search the house of one of these clergymen, the Rev. Mr. Martin, curate of Ballintoy; but Mr. Porter, being the personal friend of the curate, had not gone up to his house till the search was concluded, and when returning home the same evening, he had again called on Mr. Martin, and, after spending some time with him, had parted with him in the usual friendly manner. Yet, on this incident, reports were

their civil rights, on the pretext of securing the Established Church, were driven to do, in the face of adverse and intolerant landlords in the one case, the Roman Catholic priests and laity of the county of Clare, under similar oppression, and for a similar pretext, did precisely the same, and with like results, in the other; they carried their respective candidates in the face of all the actual or threatened coercion of their landlords. But the triumph of O'Connell was attended with more immediate success than that of Upton, for the repeal of Romanist disabilities followed within five years, whereas the Presbyterian disabilities were not repealed till above fifty years afterwards.

immediately raised that the Presbyterians, as a body, taking advantage of the public alarm to injure the Episcopalians, and acting without any legal warrants, were searching the houses of the clergy of the Established Church alone, and were encouraged and assisted by one of their ministers in these irregular and malicious proceedings. These rumours were immediately transmitted, most probably by Dr. Tisdall, who afterwards distinguished himself as the manager of the whole case, to Dr. Smyth, the bishop of Down and Connor, and ultimately to the archbishop of Armagh, both of whom joined in a memorial to the lords-justices, bewailing the hardship to which their clergy were exposed from the dissenters, and praying for redress. This memorial was referred by their excellencies to the going judges of assizes, who happened to be Chief-Justice Foster of the common pleas, and Mr. Justice Macartney of the king's bench, with instructions to inquire into the truth of the charges contained therein at the ensuing spring assizes, and to report the result without loss of time. Accordingly, in the last week of March, these judges investigated the matter with the greatest care and impartiality. Counsel was employed both by the Episcopalians, in support of the memorial, and by the Presbyterians, in their own defence. Notwithstanding this array of counsel, Dr. Tisdall, who was present conducting the prosecution, as it may be termed, applied to the judges for permission to examine the witnesses, which was granted to him, though contrary to the usage of the court in similar cases. Here, then, was one alleged fact inculcating the Presbyterians fully investigated in open court, and the result was precisely what might have been anticipated—a complete failure. Never was a charge, or rather a series of six charges, as enumerated by the judges, so thoroughly disproved in every particular. The grand jury, who were summoned by the court to hear the investigation and give their opinion, unanimously acquitted the Presbyterians and Mr. Porter of the charges so recklessly preferred against them. Both of the judges were of the same opinion; and, on their return to Dublin, they drew out an ample official report of the entire proceedings, which was laid before the lords-justices, and afterwards published.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> It appeared with this title, "The Report of the Judges of Assize for the

By these judges, at the same assizes, the Rev. Mr. M'Cracken was at length liberated from custody, in which he had been held, partly in the gaol at Carrickfergus, and partly out of it, by permission of the sheriffs, for the long period of nearly two years and a half. In a letter to a friend in Scotland, he has given the following account of the manner in which he was freed from the vexatious charges urged against him by his enemies :—"As to my affair at the assizes, it was thus : The Sheriff, [Mr. Stafford of Mount Stafford], upon delivering the gaol to his successor, [Mr. Clements of Straid, near Carrickfergus], called me to be present, that he might return me with the rest of the prisoners to the new sheriff; which was done accordingly, and I continued prisoner until the judges came. Then I waited on them in their chamber, acquainted them with my case, and alleged my circumstances were very hard in that I had been kept two years and a half prisoner, and denied bail in a case which I alleged was bailable. They told me that as for what was past, they could do nothing for me; but if I petitioned they would hear me in the public court. Accordingly, I did; and when they came to inquire into my imprisonment and how I came to be detained, they could not find that I was now under any *mittimus* or on the calendar. And so, according to their ordinary way at general gaol deliveries, they caused public proclamation to be made to know if there was any to appear to prosecute against me; and none appearing I was then freed, so that now I am at home. But," he adds, with becoming resignation, "what may come next I know not; only I find both body and mind fast failing, for I can neither ride nor walk as formerly; so that I am as under a new confinement for the present. But it may go off for some little time; yet it cannot be long until I come to the house appointed for all living."<sup>16</sup>

North-East Circuit of Ulster, upon a Memorial given in to the Lord-Justices of Ireland by his Grace the Lord Primate, and the Lord Bishop of Down and Connor. Together with the said Memorial and Depositions annexed, and the Representation of the Grand Jury of the County of Antrim. Printed in the year 1716." 12mo, pp. 32. So great was the interest taken in this affair, that this "Report" was reprinted the same year in London, 12mo, pp. 39.

<sup>16</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 122. The letter is dated May 8, 1716. Mr. M'Cracken lived, though in great infirmity, till November 1730.



By this time the Presbyterians in Ulster were beginning to feel anxious for the return from England of the bill containing the clause for exempting them, if in the military service, from the penalties of the Test Act, which had passed the commons in the early part of the year. But they were little aware of the opposition it had encountered from the bishops, led on by their old antagonist, Archbishop King. On Saturday, the 4th of February, as already related,<sup>17</sup> the commons had placed their bill in the hands of the lords-justices; but the moment the bishops understood what had been done, they took immediate steps to defeat even the partial relief from the Test Act granted to the dissenters in that bill. On the following Monday, they introduced into the House of Lords an exact counterpart of the commons' bill, but omitting altogether the clause relating to the test, and, as might be expected, it met with no opposition. The secretary for Ireland, writing on the same day to Mr. Secretary Stanhope in London, says—"The good bishops, and Dublin the foremost, in order to spoil what we had with so much pains been working in the House of Commons for the dissenters, have this day brought in a like bill to ours, for the security of the king's person and government, without our clause for dispensing with the test as to the militia and army commissions. As the right reverend bench, when all of a side, is too strong for any one side of the temporal lords,<sup>18</sup> they carried it; and we shall send you a bill from each house to the same purpose; of which the choice will be more easy on your side than the getting that passed which you return to us will be on this."<sup>19</sup> Embarrassed by this factious procedure of the peers, the lords-justices, instead of forwarding both bills, as intimated in this letter of the secretary, submitted them to a committee of the Irish privy-council, in order that out of them one bill might be framed for

<sup>17</sup> See the third preceding page.

<sup>18</sup> Indeed it was not unusual for the bishops to constitute a majority of the house. For instance, I find occasionally fifteen bishops present to only ten lay peers, sometimes sixteen bishops to twelve lay peers, fourteen to ten, and even on several occasions I find the house consisted of ten bishops to five lay lords

<sup>19</sup> State Paper Office, London.

transmission to England. Their excellencies were anxious to preserve the clause as it stood in favour of the Presbyterians; but knowing the influence of the bishops, and the pertinacity with which they would adhere to their own bill, in opposition to that of the commons, they applied to the ministry in England to be permitted to compromise the difference between the two houses, by continuing the exemption from the test to those serving in the regular army during the existing rebellion only, and from thence to the close of the next session of parliament. They confidently hoped that the bishops might be induced to support such a limited relief as this; and knowing that Archbishop King, the prime mover of the opposition, was in correspondence with Dr. Wake, the archbishop of Canterbury, on this subject, they farther recommended that the secretary of state in London should also consult his grace, and endeavour to secure his co-operation with the government.<sup>20</sup> Having received the required permission, the lords-justices brought the question before the committee of council, the result of whose deliberations they thus communicated to Mr. Secretary Stanhope, on the 24th of February:—"Yesterday the clause in favour of the Dissenters was debated in a committee of council where most of the members in town attended. The clause consists of three parts; the *first*, to indemnify the Dissenters for having acted in the militia as officers or commissioners of array; the *second*, to make them capable of serving in the militia for ever; and the *third*, to enable them to bear commissions in the army for ten years." The lords-justices then state that the first part of the clause was admitted as highly reasonable by all, that the second was opposed by no one save Lord Abercorn, and that the great debate turned upon the third part, which, they say, "was strenuously opposed by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Bishops of Clogher and Dromore, Lords Castlecomer, Abercorn, and some others, with less force." The alteration already mentioned was then proposed by the lord-chancellor and the chief-justice, and was at first accepted by all but Lord Abercorn. But

<sup>20</sup> Dr. Wake, it is said, owed his elevation to his character for moderation and tenderness towards dissenters; but Lambeth changed his views, and he proved as intolerant a High-Churchman as King himself could desire.

after some consideration, the bishops, apprehending that the proposed clause empowered such dissenters as now carried arms to do so as long as they lived, seemed to change their minds, and indicated their probable opposition to it on its being reported to the council at large. The lords-justices then add—"Our present opinion is, that it will not be proper for us to make any farther concessions in this matter, whereby so great a body as the dissenters might be disobliged, and for which the Church will hardly thank us; though in effect the point of debate is only an empty compliment, and of no real value to the dissenters, because they must submit to the test whenever they shall remove to England.<sup>21</sup> Wherefore we shall leave it as it now stands, and any further alterations that shall be thought proper in England may move as a favour from his majesty to the Church."<sup>22</sup> When, three weeks afterwards, the clause, as thus limited, was submitted to the whole council, the bishops did oppose it, and it was carried by the bare majority of one. The lords-justices, therefore, when

<sup>21</sup> Even the members of the Established Church of Scotland, when their national regiments were quartered in England or Ireland, were compelled to attend and to communicate in the Episcopal churches. And what seems now-a-days still more unjustifiable, even their chaplains, ordained ministers of the Established Church, were forced to yield a like conformity, or forfeit their appointments. A case of this extraordinary kind occurred in Ireland, but I have not been able to ascertain in what part, in the year 1714, which, among other grievances, was laid before King George by the commissioners of the Scottish Church, who waited on him with an address soon after his accession. A correspondent thus relates this matter to the historian, Wodrow:—"And when the case of the two Scots regiments then in Ireland was represented to his majesty, that they must either quit their posts or communicate according to law, the king said it was a sore matter that his best subjects and servants must either debauch their consciences or lose their posts; and asked, was there no remedy for it? It was answered, No, till the parliament sat down. But one [of the commissioners] answered, that there was a remedy if his majesty pleased, and that was, to call over the regiments to Scotland; which it was said he presently ordered to be done." Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. ix., No. 38. Is it any wonder that the king should be anxious to put an end to a state of things (to take the lowest view of it) so anomalous; and, by the repeal of the Test Act, enable all his subjects to serve their country, in all parts of it alike, without violence to their religious convictions?

<sup>22</sup> State Paper Office, London.

transmitting the bill, advised the English government to withdraw altogether the last part of the clause relating to the regular army, as otherwise the bill would undoubtedly be thrown out by the lords.

Whether this recommendation was acted on by the king's advisers in London there is now no means of ascertaining. All that is on record amounts merely to this :—the bill was returned from England with the usual sanction of the crown, but in what form the clause relating to the test then stood does not appear. On the last day of May, it was read a first time in the House of Commons. Three days afterwards, it was read a second time without opposition, though not without discussion ; for a copy of the bill, as it stood when it left that house to be transmitted to England, was ordered to be laid on the table. On the 4th of June, the house went into committee, and having made some progress, asked leave to sit again, which was ordered to take place on the following Monday. But the commons, on Saturday, adjourned over that day, (though the lords sat on it), evidently for the purpose of getting rid of that order of the day, and, strange to say, it was never renewed. The bill was consequently abandoned by the government, and the Test Act remained in full force against the Presbyterians, whether they served the crown in the militia, or army, or in any other capacity whatever. The cause of this unexpected issue cannot now be ascertained. It is probable that Archbishop King had succeeded in bringing such an amount of High Church influence, especially from his own political section, to bear upon the government, both in London and Dublin, and that the Irish House of Lords had so unequivocally intimated their rejection of the bill if it contained any clause whatever interfering with the Test Act, that the lords-justices deemed it most advisable to abandon the bill altogether. The House of Commons appear to have been early apprised of this determination, and to have acquiesced in it very reluctantly. For, on the 5th of June, the very day after the bill had been in committee, they adopted the two following resolutions in favour of the Presbyterians, in order to neutralise, so far as lay in their power, the triumph of the bishops :—“ Resolved, *nemine contradicente*, That such of his majesty's Protestant dissenting subjects of this king-



dom as have taken commissions in the militia, or acted in the commission of array, have hereby done a seasonable service to his majesty's royal person and government, and the Protestant interest in this kingdom." When the next resolution was proposed, the High Church party moved the previous question, but without success, and the house adopted this second resolution without a division—"Resolved, That any person who shall commence a prosecution against any dissenter who has accepted or shall accept of a commission in the army or militia, is an enemy to King George and the Protestant interest, and a friend to the Pretender."<sup>23</sup>

With these resolutions, satisfactory so far as the commons were concerned, but very unsatisfactory as regarded the legal rights of the dissenters, this unsuccessful attempt to obtain even a partial repeal of the Test Act was brought to a close. Thus, for a second time, by the paramount influence of the Established Church, were the government defeated in their generous policy towards the Presbyterians. On the former occasion, under the Earl of Wharton's administration, both houses of parliament had concurred in resisting the attempt, while the crown was known to be adverse to it, so that defeat was not surprising. But, on this occasion, although the commons supported the government, and the king was notoriously most anxious for the success of the measure, their united weight was overborne by the bishops on the strength of that once formidable cry of "the Church in danger," from which all classes of dissenters have so often and so deeply suffered.

The abandonment of this bill made it necessary for those Presbyterian gentlemen and others who had entered the militia, or served as commissioners of array, to decide whether, upon this resolution of the commons, they ought to continue in the public service. They accordingly held a meeting for this purpose in the middle of June, when they unanimously adopted for their guidance the following resolutions:—"I. That it is our opinion that all the gentlemen of our persuasion in this kingdom who have accepted of commissions of array or commissions in the

<sup>23</sup> Journals of the Irish Commons, vol. iv. p. 255.

militia, should continue to act in pursuance of them ; and that any gentlemen to whom any such commission, either of array or in the militia, shall be offered hereafter, shall accept of the same and act in pursuance of it. II. That if any one gentleman, who shall continue to act in pursuance of this advice, shall happen to be prosecuted, all the other gentlemen shall stand by him and defray the expenses he shall be put to, as a common charge upon the whole. III. That there shall be proper application made at a seasonable juncture for our relief." These resolutions were submitted to the synod, which, a few days after, met at Belfast on the 19th of June, and were fully approved of by the brethren then assembled, as the only becoming course which could be adopted, whether towards the House of Commons, who had so generously resolved to protect them, towards their sovereign, who was so anxious to befriend them, or towards their country, which in those critical times needed the services of every loyal subject.

This synod was attended by a larger number of members than had been present at any previous meeting, amounting to nearly one hundred and ten ministers and eighty elders. This numerous attendance was occasioned principally by its being known that the terms on which application was to be made to the government for a Toleration Act were to be settled at this meeting. The resolutions which were adopted in November 1714 had proceeded from a private though influential meeting of ministers and gentlemen, and on one of these resolutions some difference of opinion had sprung up among the brethren who had not taken part in that meeting. It was, therefore, necessary that the question should be deliberately discussed and settled by the supreme court, and that without delay, as it was believed that the House of Lords, having defeated the repeal of the test, were now disposed to concur with the commons in passing a Toleration Act. The ministers in Dublin, who were not members of the court, also urged this synod, by letter, to issue this matter at the present meeting, so as to be prepared with a definite basis on which they might jointly negotiate with government for an act, the moment a favourable opportunity might offer. The first

step which the synod took was to consider the two resolutions on this subject which had been formerly agreed to. The former of these, laying down subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith as the ground on which toleration should be sought and accepted, was now unanimously approved of; and this clause, "contained in their and our public confessions of faith," having been added to the formula referred to in the second resolution, the debate arose whether they should offer subscription to it as it now stood,<sup>24</sup> as another basis for a Toleration Act, in case the Westminster Confession of Faith might not be accepted by government. It was on the expediency of this alternative proposal that much difference of opinion was anticipated, some brethren being of opinion that the offer to subscribe the formula was equivalent to a rejection of the Westminster Confession; but the discussion was conducted with so much judgment, candour, and mutual forbearance, that the synod were almost unanimous in adopting it. The minute of synod on this part of the subject, though long, is worthy of being preserved in these pages, not only as an excellent directory in similar discussions, and a specimen of the manner in which the proceedings of synod were then recorded, but principally as a satisfactory evidence that the ministers were still perfectly united on all doctrinal points, as well as on the lawfulness of subscription to a prepared confession.

<sup>24</sup> See the commencement of this chapter. With this addition, the formula, as agreed to by the synod, stood thus :—" I profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God, the true God, and in God the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. I believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by Divine inspiration, and that they are a perfect rule of Christian faith and practice. And, pursuant to this belief, I agree to all the doctrines common to the Protestant Churches at home and abroad, contained in their and our public Confessions of Faith." Copied from the Minutes of Synod. See also a letter from Mr. M'Cracken to the Rev. Mr. Wright of Kilmarnock; Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 123. Some dissatisfaction was excited among the people in Lisburn and other places by the dissentients from the synod's resolutions, but it soon subsided. See another letter from Mr. M'Cracken in February 1717, in "The Wodrow Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 238, with Wodrow's reply in p. 240, who seems to have agreed with M'Cracken.

“It was agreed by us all unanimously as a preliminary to all the ensuing debates, and as a point not controverted among us, that all the propositions contained in the above formula are divine truths. After much debate the first question that was proposed was occasioned by a scruple humbly moved by some brethren, namely, that should we first propose, as we have all resolved to do, the confession of faith as the terms of a toleration, and should we afterwards, upon the legislature refusing it, accept of or propose the above formula or any other terms as the condition of a toleration, that this would be a receding from our confession of faith. On the other hand, it was observed by others, that this formula was in substance the same with our confession of faith, and a compendious abridgement of divers of the most fundamental articles of it; and that the tolerating of us upon our subscription to it would give the public sanction of authority to our standing by and preaching up all our known principles contained in our confession of faith: and divers arguments being offered on both sides, it was agreed that before we should put the vote it should be proposed—That if the aforesaid scruple did still remain with any brother, he should declare it in order to his receiving further satisfaction. Upon which to our great comfort some did declare, with thankfulness to God, that their scruple was removed by the clear and convincing reasoning of the brethren. And there remaining one brother with whom the said scruple did yet seem to be of weight, after much reasoning for his satisfaction the following question was put, viz.—Whether our accepting a toleration upon the above formula, as the terms and condition thereof, be or can be justly construed a relinquishing the confession of faith as the confession of our faith; and it was carried in the negative with only one dissenting voice.<sup>25</sup> The next question that was put was this, viz., is it lawful to subscribe the above formula if enjoined by lawful authority, as the condition of a toleration? And it was carried in the affirmative [with only one dissenting voice.] The last question

<sup>25</sup> This person was Mr. M’Cracken of Lisburn. His reasons for this view of the question are given at great length in a letter to Wodrow. Wodrow MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 123.



that was proposed was this, viz., after our using all proper endeavours for obtaining a toleration upon our subscribing the confession of faith, and after its appearing that such an attempt is hopeless, shall we ask a toleration upon the above formula at such a season as shall be agreed upon to be convenient by common concert between ministers and gentlemen in the North, and ministers and gentlemen in the South of Ireland, to meet together for that purpose in a committee to be nominated afterwards or not? It was carried in the affirmative [with five dissenting voices, viz., three ministers and two elders, and three voted *non liquet*, viz., one minister and two elders."]<sup>26</sup>

These resolutions were also submitted to a number of gentlemen, present at this synod, though not members of it, all of whom expressed their cordial concurrence in them. The only other step which the meeting now took connected with their political relations, was to prepare an address to the king, congratulating his majesty on the defeat of the Pretender and the suppression of the late rebellion. In the concluding paragraph, they thus allude to their past conduct as subjects, and their future hopes:—"And it may be a peculiar satisfaction to us that the honourable House of Commons have generously acknowledged that Protestant dissenters have done a seasonable service to your majesty's royal person and government, and the Protestant interest in this kingdom. And we crave leave to depend on your majesty's clemency and their favourable resolutions, till it please the legislature to give us a more effectual relief; being firmly resolved to venture our all in defence of your majesty's rightful title and the Protestant succession in your royal family against the Pretender and his abettors, and all your majesty's enemies whatsoever."

In the altered circumstances in which the Presbyterian body

<sup>26</sup> The minute, as given in the text, contains in the original record the date of the vote *in committee*. But I thought it best to omit that unimportant item, and to substitute within these brackets the state of the vote *in the synod*, taken from a subsequent part of the minutes, where the clerk was instructed to enter the state of the vote in synod, in order to place upon record the harmony of the meeting.

were now placed—favoured by the crown and protected by the House of Commons, their endowment restored and freedom of religious action practically enjoyed, though still exposed to annoyance on the subject of their marriages,<sup>27</sup>—they were enabled to resume the project of preaching to their countrymen in the Irish language, which they had attempted in 1710, but which had been seriously interrupted by the political troubles and excitement of the last four years of the preceding reign. The attention of the synod, now met at Belfast, was directed to this subject, by a letter from the presbytery, or rather association, of the ministers of Dublin, part of whom were not in connection with the synod of Ulster.<sup>28</sup> These ministers urged their northern brethren to join with them in preaching the Gospel in the Irish language in Romanist districts; and the synod “unanimously

<sup>27</sup> Thus I find the Rev. Gilbert Kennedy, minister of Tullylish, in the county of Down, writing to Wodrow, October 5, 1716 :—“Our prelates are violent where I live. Four of my flock have been lately delivered to Satan for being married by me; I question if they’ll take as many from him these two days as they delivered in one.” Wodrow’s MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 124. And, two years afterwards, the Rev. Wm. Hair of Longford, writing from a different and remote part of the country, informs the historian—“Some of our brethren here are under prosecution in the bishops’ courts for marrying some of their people, and some are excommunicated. We do not find any abatement of that spirit of persecution, tho’ they boast of being the most charitable Church in the world.” Ibid, vol. xx., No. 134.

<sup>28</sup> The Presbyterian congregations and ministers at this time in Dublin, were *Capel Street*, Rev. Francis Iredell and Rev. Robert Craghead; *Plunket Street*, Rev. Alexander Sinclair and Rev. Thomas Maquay, ordained in the following year; *Usher’s Quay*, Rev. James Arbuckle. These three congregations were in connection with the synod of Ulster, and under the charge of the presbytery of Belfast. The other congregations were also three—*Wood Street*, Rev. Joseph Boyse and Rev. Richard Choppin; *New Row*, Rev. Nathaniel Weld and Rev. John Leland, ordained in December of this year; and *Cook Street*, Rev. Thomas Steward. These three congregations, though nominally Presbyterian, and styling their meeting a presbytery, were virtually Independents; but *all* these ten ministers united in one body, which was also called a presbytery, but which was merely an association or ministerial conference, for their mutual improvement and encouragement, and for promoting the interests of religion in Dublin, but which neither claimed nor exercised any sort of presbyterial oversight or authority over its members.

resolved to encourage this excellent design to the utmost of their power." They made out a new list of those ministers in the North capable of preaching in Irish, which comprised three additional ministers to those formerly specified, and three probationers,<sup>29</sup> all of whom were appointed to preach in succession in various districts, according to a plan now agreed upon. The synod also applied to the provincial synod of Argyle to furnish them with two probationers capable of preaching in Irish, and to send over one of them to enter on the work without delay. They agreed to erect a school for teaching to read Irish in the town of Dundalk, to which each presbytery was to contribute a certain sum, and they resolved to print editions of the catechism and of a short grammar in the Irish tongue. All these measures were carried into execution, but some of them not until the following year. The Rev. Archibald Maclane, a probationer from Argyleshire, was steadily employed as an itinerant preacher, under the

<sup>29</sup> These three additional Irish-preaching ministers were—the Rev. Charles Lynd of Fannet, in Donegall, the Rev. Robert Thomson of Belturbet, and the Rev. Patrick Simson of Dundalk. The three probationers were Mr. Robert Stewart, afterwards minister of Carlan, or Donoughmore, in Tyrone, Mr. Samuel Irvine, afterwards minister of Lisluney, in Armagh, and Mr. Thomas Strawbridge, afterwards minister of Carndonagh, in Donegall. One of the brethren formerly mentioned (see note 13, chap. xxiii.) being dead, there were now, therefore, fourteen ministers and probationers able to preach in the Irish tongue—a number which the Church has never since been able to furnish for this important service!—The Rev. Charles Lynd, mentioned above, was descended from a French Protestant family in Normandy, one of the numerous refugee-households whom the tyranny of Louis XIV. compelled to fly from France in the end of the seventeenth century. His father hastily converted his available property into money, fitted out a ship, intending to land in Ireland at Shane's Castle! was driven into Lough Swilly, and ultimately settled at Ramullan. His son Charles was born in 1681, entered the University of Edinburgh in 1699, and was ordained as minister of Fannet, including Ramullan, in February 1708. This being an Irish-speaking district, he had early learned to speak and preach in that language. I have seen several of his private devotional papers preserved by his descendants, which show him to have been a very experienced Christian and a most zealous minister. He removed to the charge of the second congregation in Coleraine in 1728, and died there in December 1751.

direction of a committee of synod, while to their own Irish-speaking ministers particular districts were assigned.

At the synod in 1717, so favourable a report was made of the diligence of these ministers, and of the measure of success vouchsafed to their efforts, that the following resolution was adopted by the meeting:—"Considering it has pleased God in his good providence to countenance and bless our endeavours to the conversion of some, this synod will, in an humble dependence on the blessing of God, continue to use their utmost endeavours to further so good a work." Pursuant to this resolution, various additional arrangements, which it is unnecessary to detail, were made at this synod, in order to place this mission to the Irish-speaking Romanists on a wider and more stable basis. In carrying out, during the previous year, the plans for Irish preaching, it was found that two of the frontier presbyteries, within whose bounds were the greatest number of Irish-speaking Romanists, consisted of too many congregations, and that their members were so widely scattered as to render it difficult for them to fulfil their presbyterial appointments, and conjointly to take the oversight of so extended a district. Accordingly, at this synod, each of these presbyteries was divided into two, that of Monaghan into the presbyteries of Augher and Longford, but, six years afterwards, it was found expedient to reunite them under their former designation; and that of Convoy was now permanently divided into the presbyteries of Strabane and Letterkenny. Thus the nine presbyteries which had been formed in 1702 out of the five original ones, were now augmented to eleven, having under their care about one hundred and forty congregations, twenty of which were still aided by grants from the missionary funds of the synod.

While the Presbyterian Church was thus "lengthening her cords," and extending her boundaries in the land, she was not inattentive to the duty of "strengthening her stakes," and securing for herself a legal position in the realm. Without this recognised security, the only result of her wider diffusion would be to present the broader surface for the attacks of her enemies. The efforts of her friends were now once more directed to obtain a fulfil-



ment of the liberal promises in her favour, which the sovereign and his ministry had more than once given. The plans of government had not been so matured as to enable them to bring the promised measures before the session of the Irish parliament, which sat for the last four months of this year,<sup>30</sup> under the government of the Duke of Bolton, the lord-lieutenant, who had been sworn into office in the beginning of August. The friends of the Presbyterian Church, however, deemed it inexpedient to be inactive any longer. In the early part of the following year, a meeting of gentlemen and ministers connected with both the North and South, met at Newry, to consider how they could most effectively urge the government to take up the questions connected with their relief. They appointed a deputation from both parts of the kingdom to proceed to London for this purpose. The members from the South were the Rev. Messrs. Boyse<sup>31</sup> and Choppin, with Mr. Walter Stevens, an eminent man of business in Dublin, and registrar of the dissenters' general fund there; but from the North only one person was commissioned, the Rev. Samuel Haliday, then an ordained minister, without charge, who had formerly been employed in the service of the Church.<sup>32</sup> At the synod in June of this year, Messrs.

<sup>31</sup> This delay on the part of the government may have been occasioned by a desire to try the repeal of the Test Act in England before they should attempt it in Ireland. That trial was made in December of this year, but without success, though they succeeded in repealing two other obnoxious acts—that against occasional conformity, and the memorable schism bill of Queen Anne's last parliament—by a bill which, under the appropriate title of "An act for strengthening the Protestant interest," received the royal assent in February 1719.

<sup>32</sup> Calamy, in his "Life," (vol. ii. pp. 471, 472), says, that Mr. Boyse was in London on these affairs in the reign of Queen Anne, and that the increase of Royal Bounty, which afterwards took place, occurred during that reign. But his memory must have failed him, as no addition was made to that grant till this year.

<sup>33</sup> The Rev. Samuel Haliday, the chief occasion of the bitter and protracted controversy among the Irish Presbyterians, detailed in the next chapter, was the son of the Rev. Samuel Haliday, minister of Omagh, before the Revolution, and afterwards of Ardstraw, where he died in 1724. Young Haliday, or Hollyday, as he then spelled his name, entered the University of

Choppin and Haliday were present, though not constituent members, and reported to the meeting the result of their negotiations in London. From this report, which is recorded in very general terms, it may be gathered, that little progress had yet been made by the government in the preparation of the expected measures, but that hopes were held out of something effectual being done for their relief in the next session of parliament. On one point, however, they were able to give positive information to the synod. They announced the gratifying fact that the king, in concurrence with his ministers, had placed on the civil list for England the sum of eight hundred pounds a year, as an augmentation to the Royal Bounty, to be paid quarterly, commencing in the end of the current year. Of this sum, only one-half was appropriated to the synod of Ulster, comprising about one hundred and forty ministers, while the other half was given to the ministers of Dublin and the South, who, as they amounted to not more than a dozen or thirteen at this date, received a very disproportionate share of the grant. Had it been divided rateably between the two bodies, the sum accruing to the southern ministers, who were not previously endowed, would not have exceeded one hundred and fifty pounds, while that to the northern ministers would have been six hundred and fifty, which, with their former endowment, would have merely placed their individual shares on an equality with those of their brethren in the South.<sup>33</sup> Not the least dissatisfaction, however, was ex-

Glasgow in 1701, where he took the degree of M.A., and was licensed by the presbytery of Convoiy in 1705. He had subsequently travelled on the Continent, had received ordination at Geneva in 1708, and officiated both in Flanders and in England as chaplain to a Scots regiment. He appears to have been resident in London in 1712, probably on to 1714, and afterwards. In the former year, his testimonials of license and ordination were laid before the synod, and he was received as a minister without a charge, and in the latter year, he laboured in London to prevent the schism act from being extended to Ireland—a service which, though unsuccessful, the synod gratefully acknowledged, and ordered his expenses to be repaid him out of the synod's fund. At the date of this appointment mentioned in the text, he was also in London, where he appears to have been highly esteemed and well known to the leaders of the Whig party both in and out of the government.

<sup>33</sup> Owing to the rapid increase of congregations in Ulster, the share of

pressed by the synod. They thanked Mr. Haliday for his valuable services on this occasion in London, and presented to him the sum of thirty pounds as a token of their gratitude. This meeting also appointed Colonel Upton, M.P., who was about to visit England on private business, to confer with their friends in London, and to watch over their interests, requesting him, "that upon good intelligence of a prospect of success in what concerns this Church, he may apprise us of it" in due time.

These political affairs do not appear to have again occupied the attention of the synod. In the record of the annual meeting for the next year, 1719, there is no reference to them. It is pleasing to find the members of the supreme court, when thus freed from mere secularities, devoting increased attention to their Irish mission. The condition of the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders in Dublin was brought before them at this time by a letter from the ministers of that city; and the facility now afforded by a legacy of fifty pounds a year for the support of an Irish preaching missionary, bequeathed by the late Dr. Daniel Williams of London,<sup>34</sup> encouraged them to extend their operations both in Dublin and elsewhere. Colonel Upton, on his return from England, acquainted them of the deep interest which was felt there by the dissenters in their scheme for preaching the Gospel to their Irish-speaking countrymen. He also informed them that the Rev. Messrs. Reynolds and Evans, two eminent dissenting ministers in London, had already remitted fifty pounds, which they had collected for this mission, adding, "that considerable sums besides might be expected for the same use." Cheered by these proofs of sympathy and public support, the synod carefully

each northern minister at this date had been reduced to about eight pounds per annum, and this additional grant only yielded about two pounds ten shillings more, or *ten guineas* in all to each, whereas the new endowment to the southern ministers amounted to above *thirty pounds* each. But, as their congregations were in general smaller than those in Ulster, they were justly considered as entitled to this larger proportion.

<sup>34</sup> Dr. Williams had been nearly twenty years minister of Wood Street Church, in Dublin, prior to the Revolution, after which he settled in London, where he died in 1714.

revised their missionary plans, and, by a series of new resolutions, endeavoured to render them more systematic, and, therefore, more effective. Ministers were specially commissioned to preach to the Highlanders, and to the natives in Dublin, in their vernacular tongue. The catechisms and other works translated into that language were freely circulated, and fresh efforts were made to increase the number of Irish-preaching ministers. At no time did this important scheme attain to a more efficient and promising condition than in this and the following year. But the unhappy discussions which then arose in the synod, caused by the innovating spirit of a few ministers, so occupied the attention of the Church during the next six years, that her missionary spirit waxed cold; and this hopeful attempt to propagate the truth, by means of the vernacular language of the country, soon fell to the ground, and was not revived till more than a century afterwards.

This synod had scarcely terminated its sittings in Belfast, when the parliament commenced theirs in Dublin, the Duke of Bolton being still lord-lieutenant. For some time previously, the government were at last really engaged in preparing effective measures of relief for the Irish Presbyterians.<sup>35</sup> So early as the month of February, they were in communication with the Duke of Bolton, then in London, on the subject; and soon after they completed the draft of a bill, which, in the middle of June, they sent over to Dublin for the consideration of his grace and the Irish council, then engaged in making the necessary arrangements for the opening of parliament. The ample provisions of this new bill, the cold reception it met with from his grace, the doubtful prospects of the Presbyterians at this juncture, and the

<sup>35</sup> This was the concluding part of the liberal measures devised by the prime minister, Lord Stanhope, for the relief of dissenters, English as well as Irish. He had already, in the English parliament of 1718-19, carried the repeal of the bill against occasional conformity, and of the tyrannical schism bill, and he had also projected the repeal of the Test Act, as far as it affected the dissenters, but he was compelled by the High Church party reluctantly to abandon this portion of his generous scheme of relief. See Belsham's "*History of Great Britain*," vol. iii. p. 123, &c., and a fuller and more accurate account in Lord Mahon's "*History of England*," vol. i. p. 489, &c.



miserable amount of relief which was likely to be granted them, are all so clearly set forth in the following unpublished letter of the lord-lieutenant to the secretary of state in London, that no apology is needed for giving it a place in these pages without abridgment :—<sup>36</sup>

“I have read over and considered the draft of a bill in favour of the dissenters, which you sent enclosed in your private letter of the 16th of this month ; and find it to be an entire repeal of that part of the act to prevent the further growth of Popery which requires persons who are to be admitted to offices to receive the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of Ireland ; and that it gives the Protestant dissenters the like toleration, as I choose to call it, or, as others will term it, establishment, as those of the Episcopal communion in North Britain enjoy by virtue of the act made in the tenth year of the late queen. You may remember that I told my Lord Sunderland, my Lord Stanhope and you in February last, at my Lord Sunderland’s house, when you were discoursing of the expectations which the dissenters in Ireland had of something being done in their favour in the parliament of Great Britain—that if they proposed or expected an entire repeal of the Sacramental Test, it would be found to be a matter of the greatest difficulty, if not impossible to be obtained ; and that it would turn to the dishonour and prejudice of the government if anything of this nature should be attempted without success. At the same time, I told you that the dissenters had formerly been offered a legal toleration by several members of the House of Commons, but that they seemed cool in the matter, hoping at some time or other to obtain an entire repeal of the Sacramental Test ; and that the northern dissenters were not at all satisfied with such a toleration as the dissenters in England enjoy, but insisted on and expected the same allowance of the exercise of their religion and ministry as those of the Episcopal communion enjoy in North Britain, which I did believe a parliament here would not be inclined to allow them. These were my thoughts at that time

<sup>36</sup> State Paper Office, London. His grace’s letter is dated from Dublin Castle, June 27, 1719.

on that subject, and my lord-chancellor of Ireland [Allen Brodrick], expressed himself to the like effect. It is true some of the company seemed to think that it was practicable to carry a bill through the parliament for an entire repeal of the test clause, if the king's servants in both kingdoms heartily espoused it. But the dislike to such a bill by the parliament here, particularly of the lords, was so fully and truly set out, that the Lord Sunderland proposed to send for some of the bishops of Ireland to know from them the sentiments of their brethren as well as their own—whether a repeal of the Sacramental Test would be for the general good of the Protestant interest of Ireland or pass both houses of parliament. And if that would not be consented unto, whether the dissenters might not be allowed to hold some civil or military offices and of what nature, and to worship God in their own way without being liable to prosecution for it, and what toleration would be thought reasonable to be allowed them.

“The persons who were thought most proper to be consulted upon these heads were such of the bishops who were supposed to be best disposed to allow some ease to the dissenters, and to know the sentiments of their own order in these matters. At the same time, as I thought the dissenters would be entirely disappointed if they should grasp at a total repeal of the test clause, I did apprehend that most men would concur in doing something in their favour, tho' not so much as will fully answer their expectations. They are now incapable of commissions in the militia, probably this may be altered; and as several gentlemen of the House of Commons seemed inclinable to qualify them to take commissions in the army for a certain number of years in a former session of this parliament, probably they may continue of the same opinion still. But great and I think insuperable opposition will be given to their being rendered capable of many civil offices and employments.

“I have, since my coming hither, endeavoured to inform myself by discoursing those in whom I could best confide and whose judgments may be depended on—whether I had made a just representation of the temper and disposition of the people here in relation to these matters; and find no reason to alter the

opinion I have formerly been of, but many to confirm me strongly in it—that it will not be advisable to send over from England a bill to repeal the Sacramental Test, which I think will not pass here, however recommended or endeavoured to be supported. I have consulted my lord-chancellor and the speaker [Mr. Conolly] of the House of Commons, who strongly espouses the dissenters' interest in the House of Commons, and in whom they entirely rely and have entire confidence, so is best able to judge how far will give satisfaction to the reasonable part of the dissenters, and what in probability may be obtained here for them. He told me on Saturday last, and as often as I have discoursed him since, that he was of the same opinion. Admitting then that proposition to be true, I cannot but think that the most proper method to obtain such ease for the dissenters as the parliament will come into, must be to leave it to them [the commons] to frame such heads of a bill as they shall think reasonable for that purpose; for it is impossible to know how far gentlemen will go; and if a bill shall be transmitted under the great seal in which anything farther is allowed than the parliament is inclined to give them, it is not capable of being altered in that particular but must be entirely lost.

“I intended no more by my letter of the 9th but to show you that it was impossible to answer your expectation without seeing the bill which you had drawn in England, and which I believed would have gone no farther than to qualify the dissenters for the militia and some posts in the army and to some civil employments, and to have given them a legal toleration, and to indemnify them from any penalties for having taken commissions in the militia during the late invasion in North Britain. And indeed by Mr. Upton's discourse to me, to my lord-chancellor, to the speaker and others since he landed, I could not but think that the dissenters themselves were convinced that it would be fruitless to endeavour a total repeal of the test clause; tho' I apprehend from something I have heard lately, that he hath given them an expectation of having it effected. And he told me that you and my Lord Sunderland would send me a letter proper to be shown to the king's servants, to show how far an ease to the dissenters

was desired by his majesty and expected from them. I told him I had none such letter, but that I did know his majesty's intentions to do all he could for his Protestant subjects, and that I should let all in his service know; and he then ran on in enumerating his exceptions, which, when I was reading your bill, I was expecting to find, which I wondered not to see. And the speaker has discoursed people and prepared them on this foot, and is not a little displeased with him for acting in this manner. He is our Barrington Shute here."<sup>37</sup>

From this letter, it is obvious that not one of the Irish officials, from the lord-lieutenant downwards, was very cordial or sincere in carrying out the liberal-minded policy of the king and his English ministers. Obligated to do something for the relief of the Presbyterians, they readily enough undertook the service committed to them. But, from the very outset, and before sufficient information could have been obtained, the lord-lieutenant appears to have persuaded himself of the impossibility of carrying through parliament the bill as sent over from England. This opinion, hastily formed in London, as was to be expected by listening to the bishops, his grace found verified in Dublin, where the Episcopalian officials, full of the local prejudices and antipathies of Irish society, would be but too glad to confirm it, as their excuse for meeting the claims of the Presbyterians with the paltry amount of relief which they alleged to be obtainable.

Before the lord-lieutenant's despatch could reach London, his grace had opened the parliament, on the 1st of July, with the usual formalities, and in his speech from the throne he thus referred to the proposed relief of the dissenters:—"His majesty has commanded me to acquaint you that as he hath the welfare of the Church by law established under his peculiar care, and re-

<sup>37</sup> The gentleman here referred to was Mr. Shute, an eminent dissenter, who had assumed the name of Barrington, under the will of a person of that name, and who afterwards became the first Lord Barrington. At this period, he was the leader of the dissenting interest in parliament, the author of several pamphlets in favour of a repeal of the test, and the indefatigable, though perhaps indiscreet, advocate of toleration.



solves always to support and maintain it, so it would be very pleasing to him if any method could be found, (not inconsistent with the security of it), to render the Protestant dissenters more useful and capable of serving his majesty and supporting the Protestant interest than they now are; they having upon all occasions given sufficient proofs of their being well affected to his majesty's person and government and to the succession of the crown in his royal house. And this I am ordered to lay before you as a thing greatly importing his majesty's service and your own security."<sup>38</sup> In the debate upon the address in the House of Commons, this pointed allusion called forth some animadversions from the High Church party, who expressed their fear that, if the house replied to this portion of the address, as was customary, in corresponding terms, it might pledge them to an extent of concession to the dissenters which they might not be prepared to grant. Their apprehensions, however, were allayed by the house consenting to adopt in their reply this qualifying clause—that they would consider how they may render the dissenters more useful and capable of serving the crown, “so far as may be consistent with the peace and security of our present happy constitution in Church and State.” The Irish secretary, Mr. Webster, in communicating to Mr. Secretary Craggs, in London, the result of this discussion on the address, gave the following discouraging account (for he participated in all the doubts and fears of the lord-lieutenant) of the temper of the House of Commons, and of the lukewarmness of the government officials in this matter:—“By what the gentlemen of the House of Commons have hitherto discovered, there seems to be a pretty general disposition among them to do *something* for the relief of the dissenters, tho’ many are inclined to do but *little*. Such a toleration as they enjoy in England, and an indemnity for having already served in the militia [which was granted], and a capacity for serving in it for the future [which was refused], seem to be the utmost lengths that either house will come unto.—Some indeed there are, tho’ but very few, who would willingly extend these privileges to the

<sup>38</sup> Journals of the Irish Lords, vol. ii. p. 604.

dissenters farther, so as to enable them to act as justices of the peace; but if that were attempted by the government's interposition, it would very probably produce such heats as would obstruct the more necessary business of the session, and unite such a number of Whigs with the Tories as to give great perplexity. I can't help thinking, from the intimacy I have with several members, and upon observing a great reluctance even in some of his majesty's servants, who are in every other respect very zealous for his service and are of consequence in the house, that if gentlemen were left to themselves without the government's interposing any farther in this affair, the terms I have mentioned will more easily be obtained, and by that means be of more service to the public."<sup>39</sup>

On Saturday, the 4th of July, the government obtained leave in the commons to bring in heads of a bill "for rendering the Protestant dissenters more useful and capable of supporting the Protestant interest of this kingdom;" and the chancellor of the exchequer, with the solicitor-general and other members, took charge of the measure. All the clauses of this bill were not fully settled, as the lord-licutenant had requested the Presbyterian members of the House of Commons to lay before him the precise amount of relief which their body claimed, and their statement had not yet been submitted. But the High Church party, alarmed at this step, and fearing the proposed measure would offer too liberal concessions, on the following Monday obtained leave to bring in heads of a counter-bill "for exempting the Protestant dissenters of this kingdom from certain penalties to which they are now subject." This bill embraced nothing more than a bare toleration for dissenting worship; and among the members of committee who had charge of it, opposed as it was to the government measure, were the son of the Lord-Chancellor Brodrick, and the chief law-officer of the crown in the House of Commons, his majesty's attorney-general—a pretty significant indication of the lukewarmness of the Irish officials in carrying out the policy of their sovereign. On the very next day, this bill was

<sup>39</sup> State Paper Office, London. Dated July 2.

brought in and read a first time ; and the lord-lieutenant, writing the day after to the secretary of state, observes—"It is not to be imagined what a confusion and heat people are in about the ease to be given to dissenters. It has made great caballing with people that were of different sentiments before, but agree in this—in giving no ease to the dissenters, but purely a toleration with some other little things, and, we hope, an indemnity for having served in the militia [which was secured by a separate bill.] So there is no hope of carrying it so far as is set down in what you were pleased to enclose to me, and what you said that you thought that Lord Sunderland would send me. As to [being permitted to serve in] the militia and being justices of the peace, I own that I question whether that will go, tho' all will be done that can be towards it."<sup>40</sup> His grace deems it necessary to add an apology for the lord-chancellor, on account of his son being on the committee for carrying on the High Church bill in opposition to the government one. He assures the English secretary of state that the chancellor was sincerely in favour of the government measure, and was doing his best to forward it, but that he was unable to induce his son to concur in his views ; though one would think that, if his lordship had been very anxious for its success, he might have persuaded his son to abstain from appearing as one of the responsible promoters of this counter-bill, however zealously he might support it by his vote and influence.

On the 14th of July, the commons went into committee on this High Church bill, and, as will be seen from the following despatch of the lord-lieutenant, various clauses for extending further relief to the Presbyterians were negatived :—"During the debate in the committee, a clause was offered to this effect, that the usual restriction in Church leases against the tenants erecting on their lands any buildings for public worship, should not be made use of by the laity in their leases,<sup>41</sup> which practices they have of late run into ; for that thereby the toleration would be rendered in a great measure fruitless and ineffectual. But so much opposition was given to this clause and to everything that

<sup>40</sup> State Paper Office, London.

<sup>41</sup> See chap. xxiii., note 30, and chap. xxiv., note 4, and text.

was proposed beyond a bare toleration, that it was not thought advisable to let these gentlemen manifest their strength by a division. This debate having discovered that it will be impracticable to procure for the dissenters any further privileges, when the chancellor of the exchequer was this day called upon to know whether he would bring in the heads of the bill which he had desired leave for, he declared that he had been partly prevented in that design by the bill then before them, as it contained many things which he would have proposed; and that since there appeared the day before so little disposition in that house to go any further for the relief of the dissenters, he would decline bringing in any other bill in their favour."<sup>42</sup> The Irish government thus pusillanimously abandoned their own measure, without any further effort in favour of the Presbyterians; and the counter-bill of their opponents having passed through the commons, was, in the usual course of Irish legislation, next brought before the lord-lieutenant and council, to be further considered and adjusted in its details before being transmitted to England.

At this stage, the despatches of the Irish government are unfortunately not forthcoming, but the correspondence of Archbishop King of Dublin with Wake, the Archbishop of Canterbury, enables us to trace the progress of the bill through the council. Some months previously, King had laboured to impress on the English primate how undeserving the Irish Presbyterians were of any indulgence save "a bare toleration," such as had been granted to the English dissenters, assuring him that their real design was to get the whole power of the state into their hands, in order to subvert Episcopacy and establish Presbytery in Ireland, on the model of the Solemn League and Covenant!<sup>43</sup> In the privy-council, every effort was made by him to pare down the measure of the commons, meagre as it was, to the still more meagre toleration act of England. Writing to Archbishop Wake, he says—"When the Irish bill came to the council, I found it wanted the subscription to the thirty-nine articles as it is ordered

<sup>42</sup> State Paper Office, London. Dated July 16.

<sup>43</sup> King's MS. Correspondence. Letter to Wake, June 2.



in the English bill;<sup>44</sup> it wanted also the profession in the Trinity that is to be made by the Quakers, and the clause requiring a certificate that they are dissenters. To be sure I was much surprised at this, having been assured that it was exactly the English act, *mutatis mutandis*. I asked some of the commons how this came; and they told me they were not much solicitous for the bill, and believed it never would pass as it was sent, and therefore we might mend it, if fond of it, at the council. We laboured with the utmost diligence to have the clauses omitted added there; I have hardly seen or heard a longer or warmer debate: When we came to a division whether the clause relating to the subscription to the articles should be added, it was ten for it and ten against it: so the negatives carried it. On the Quakers' clauses it was the same. But there is another alteration. Whereas in the English act it is enacted that none should be prosecuted in any ecclesiastical court for or by reason of their nonconforming to the Church of England; 'tis, in the bill that goes over to you, for any matter of mere nonconformity to the Church of Ireland. When it was put to the vote whether this clause should stand part of the bill, the negatives were ten and affirmatives ten as before; but the lord-lieutenant gave the casting vote for its standing. This alteration was accidental, and yet it seemed to us of great moment; and I believe if it pass will be found so, for everything that is not settled by some temporal law will be reckoned as a matter of mere nonconformity, and so marriages and a great many other things will be left at large." In a subsequent part of the same letter he communicates another piece of information, which confirms what has been already said respecting the lord-lieutenant's want of cordiality in carrying out the liberal intentions of the English ministry.

<sup>44</sup> In the Appendix, No. I., to the Newry edition of Towgood's "Dissent from the Church of England fully justified," p. 354, note, it is stated by the anonymous writer, on the authority of an unnamed MS., that George I., with his own hand, struck out of the Irish act of toleration the clause of the English act requiring subscription to the thirty-nine articles. This story may be true, but it must refer to some previous draft of an act for Ireland; for when the present act passed through the commons, with whom it originated, no such clause was contained in it.

Archbishop King adds—"After the bill was passed [the council] and the transmiss [to England] sealed, my lord-lieutenant spoke to me and said that he would write to England to have those things that were pressed for, mended there: I suppose that this proceeded from the struggle that was apparent in the council, and an apprehension that, without them it would not [when returned from England] pass the parliament especially the House of Lords, where I believe the bishops will be unanimously against its passing without them, and a great number of the temporal lords." It may be that this intimation of the lord-lieutenant was intended merely to pacify the inexorable archbishop; but it certainly indicated no unwillingness to see the bill still farther mutilated to please the hierarchy. Whether his grace wrote to England as he promised cannot now be ascertained. But if he did, his recommendations were not adopted, for the bill was returned, in the end of the following month, without those additional clauses so warmly supported by Archbishop King.

Defeated in the privy-council, the indefatigable archbishop resorted to the expedient which he had adopted in 1716 to defeat the repeal of the Test Act, and which was then successful. On the 27th of July, he obtained leave in the House of Lords to bring in heads of a bill "to ease persons professing the Christian religion and dissenters from the Church of Ireland as by law established, from the penalties of certain laws to which they are now subject." This bill was an exact counterpart of the English act,<sup>45</sup> and the archbishop was most anxious to have it carried through the lords, and transmitted to England, before the English ministry would have completed their revision of the commons' bill. But when it had passed through committee on the 12th of August, and the report was ready to be presented, the house refused to receive it till after the harvest recess, which continued nearly six weeks. It was, therefore, not until the end of September that the bill had passed through all the forms of the House of Lords, and on the 1st of October the Archbishops of Dublin and Tuam

<sup>45</sup> King's MS. Correspondence. Letter to Dr. Charlett, Jan. 7, 1720.

laid it before the lord-lieutenant to be transmitted to England in due form. But by this time the commons' bill had been returned from England under the great seal, which closed the door against the archbishop's bill; and, consequently, he did not receive much encouragement at the castle to expect its adoption.<sup>46</sup>

The government, having now received the commons' bill from England, and having persuaded themselves that they could obtain from parliament at present no further relief for the Presbyterians, save a temporary bill of indemnity for those who had served under the crown, without having complied with the Sacramental Test, lost no time in passing the former bill through the lower house, where it encountered no serious opposition. On the 3d of October it was laid on their table and read a first time. The only discussion which it elicited was when the house was in committee, of which the lord-lieutenant gives the following account in a letter to the secretary of state in London: <sup>47</sup>—"Yesterday the dissenters' bill was debated in the committee of the House of Commons. The clause added to it in England <sup>48</sup> was at first received with some jealousy, some gentlemen fearing that it virtually granted a general indemnity from all penal statutes which any dissenter, as such, could offend against; and that therefore they would be enabled by it to teach schools and take fellowships

<sup>46</sup> Mr. Webster, the Irish secretary, writing on the 1st of October to the under-secretary of state, in London, says—"This morning the Archbishop of Dublin presented to my lord-lieutenant heads of a bill began in the House of Lords for ease of the dissenters. It is said to be entirely conformable to the English act of toleration, and done no doubt to give more strength to the opposition they intend to make in their house to the bill which began with the commons. He was told that their bill was returned from England, and that it was very late in the session to deliver another of the same tenor." (State Paper Office, London.) This dexterous manœuvre of Archbishop King thus proved abortive.

<sup>47</sup> State Paper Office, London. Dated October 15.

<sup>48</sup> This was section 17 of the act, and the effect of it was to enable all Presbyterians who might be prosecuted for nonconformity, and who had not taken the oaths as required for their protection under this act, to qualify by taking these oaths during the progress of any such prosecution, and upon their so qualifying themselves in compliance with this act, every such prosecution was to cease.

in the university, from which they are at present restrained by the act of uniformity ; since upon any prosecution in pursuance of that act, they would be able to discharge themselves from the penalties of it, by taking the oaths and making the declaration prescribed by this act, during the prosecution. On the other hand, it was very well argued by the lawyers in the house that the clause could only relate to the cases before mentioned in the act.<sup>49</sup>—The matter therefore being rightly understood, and the lawyers being all unanimous, it met with no further opposition in debate ; and tho' some few members did insist upon a division of the house, the disproportion between the members for and against the clause was so great and so visible upon that division, that they did not proceed to telling." In another letter to the same person, marked "Private," the lord-lieutenant adds, that on this occasion "there were above two hundred in the house,<sup>50</sup> which is a full house here after the recess ; and tho' they divided, it was admitted that not above twenty-three divided [against the clause in question] ; but if the house had been told, there were seven or eight would have gone over to their friends, who were Jacobites or high-fliers." Of the success of the measure, when it should reach the lords, his grace was rather apprehensive, for, in the same "private" letter, he says—"Our greatest difficulty now remains in the House of Lords, where I fear we shall be run hard. But if our troops do but stand firm, we shall carry it there by six. [The actual majority was seven.] But these two arch-bishops, Dublin and Tuam, are indefatigable in perverting as many as they can. I have seven bishops with us as I think ; may be, one may slip from me [who did in reality bolt.] In short, there shall nothing be omitted on my side that can contribute to the passing of it ; those who cannot come, I take care to have their proxies."

On the 16th of October, the bill finally passed the commons, and on the same day it was read a first time in the House of Lords, where Dr. Evans, the Bishop of Meath, took charge of the

<sup>49</sup> The legal argument is here stated at length, but I deemed it unnecessary to insert it.

<sup>50</sup> The Irish House of Commons consisted of 300 members.



measure. No opposition was made till the 22d, when the house was in committee on the bill. On this occasion there were present, according to the roll of attending peers entered on the journals, thirteen bishops and nineteen temporal lords; but from other sources it appears that other two bishops and five lords must also have been present, so that the house consisted of fifteen spiritual<sup>51</sup> and twenty-four temporal lords. The reception which the bill met with in committee will be best related in the following extract from the lord-licutenant's despatch, written on the afternoon of the same day:<sup>52</sup>—"This day the dissenters' bill was debated in the committee of the House of Lords, and was opposed by several of the spiritual lords in almost every part of it. But the objection chiefly insisted on was, that the toleration given by the bill was so general and of such a latitude that it would extend to every kind of dissenters and every form of religious worship, how wild and extravagant soever, it not being restrained to the different sects of Christianity only; since the bill not obliging any persons to subscribe any of the thirty-nine articles, the government would not gain the least assurance of the nature and tendency of their religious tenets, nor any other security from them than that of allegiance. But this was thought by other lords sufficient to entitle any body of dissenters to the benefit of a toleration, the oaths and declarations prescribed by the act being an ample security to the civil power; and there being likewise a sufficient guard provided to the doctrine of the Trinity whenever it is opposed. The last clause of the bill was the only one which occasioned a division, the numbers of which were twenty-three to sixteen; whereupon the bill was immediately reported, read the third time, and passed; this last division upon the passing of it being thirty-nine to twenty-six, proxies on both sides included."<sup>53</sup> Prior to the last vote, in order

<sup>51</sup> The Irish hierarchy at this time consisted of twenty-two prelates—viz., four archbishops and eighteen bishops. There were absent one archbishop and six bishops; but how many of these voted by proxy, and on what side, cannot be ascertained.

<sup>52</sup> State Paper Office, London. Dated October 22.

<sup>53</sup> There is no entry on the Lords' Journals of either of these divisions, as

to influence timid or wavering minds, the representation agreed to by that house in November 1711 against the dissenters, so famous for its outrageous bigotry and scandalous disregard of truth, was read by the clerk—a superfluous piece of policy, but very characteristic of the party who opposed the bill. The entire minority, which consisted of nine spiritual and seven temporal lords, among whom one is pained to find the name of the Earl of Granard, whose father had been the zealous patron of the Presbyterians in the reign of Charles II.,<sup>54</sup> entered a protest on the journals condemning the bill—*first*, because it was not identical with the English toleration act; *secondly*, because it tolerated all Protestant dissenters, without distinction of sect; and, *thirdly*, because it would encourage proselytism. The spiritual portion of this protesting minority were the Archbishops of Armagh, Dublin, and Tuam, with the Bishops of Kildare, Clonfert, Limerick, Clogher, Ossory, and Down and Connor, no fewer than seven of whom were natives of Ireland, and two only were of England. The names of the six bishops who so nobly supported the bill are worthy of being recorded in these pages; they were Evans, bishop of Meath, who had charge of the measure, Nicholson, bishop of Derry, the celebrated historical writer, Forster, bishop of Raphoe, Godwin, bishop of Kilmore, Lambert, bishop of Dromore, the opponent of M'Bride on the marriage question in 1704, and Downes, bishop of Killala. Of these tolerant and liberal-minded prelates, one only was a native of Ireland, the other five being Englishmen.<sup>55</sup> It is now

they had not proceeded to telling; but, in so small a house, there would be little difficulty in ascertaining the relative numbers. Mr. Secretary Webster, in his letter to London, of the same date with the lord-lieutenant's, says—“The dissenters' bill was this day debated in the committee of the House of Lords, and was vigorously opposed by the Archbishops of Dublin and Tuam and other spiritual lords in almost every part of it; and the primate concluded what he had to offer by assuring their lordships that schism was a damnable sin.” He adds that six bishops voted for the bill.

<sup>54</sup> See chap. xviii., note 27, and text.

<sup>55</sup> Archbishop King was, of course, very mortified at the success of this measure, and prophesied all sorts of evil from it to the Episcopal Church. “In truth,” he writes, on the 10th of November, to his like-minded corres-

impossible to discover the name of the seventh bishop, who realised the apprehensions of the lord-lieutenant, and gave his grace the slip when it came to the vote.

This bill received the royal assent on the 2d of November, under the title of "An Act for exempting the Protestant Dissenters of this kingdom from certain penalties to which they are now subject."<sup>56</sup> The present generation will scarcely believe that so meagre a boon to Presbyterians as bare permission by law to celebrate their worship, which they were then stately observing with scarcely any molestation, should have excited so much opposition from the High Church party, in the face, too, of the express wishes of the sovereign, often repeated, and of their own ostentatious declarations of willingness to grant a toleration. The exemption secured by this act was more in name than in reality—it conferred a privilege in law rather than in fact. So inapplicable was it to the circumstances of the Presbyterians, that there is reason to believe very few ministers, even at this period, availed themselves of its provisions, except in those districts where their opponents were likely to give annoyance to themselves or their worship if not protected under this law. Meagre and unsuitable as it is, it continues to be the charter of religious liberty to the Presbyterians in Ireland, while, at the same time, it continues to be little more than an obsolete statute. Scarcely a single minister has made the declaration or taken the oaths in the manner required by it, nor has there been a single place of worship registered under it, except where local disputes or a temporary ebullition of party spirit may have rendered it necessary to have recourse to its protection. The same enlightened public opinion which so generally protected Presbyterians in their worship before the passing of the act, has

pendent, Archbishop Wake, "I can't see how our Church can stand here, if God do not by a peculiar and unforeseen providence support it." As might be expected, he was also much displeased with his English brethren for presuming to oppose him. "The bill could not have passed," he says in the same letter to Wake, and repeats the sentiment in a letter to another English correspondent, "if our brethren that came to us from your side the water, had not deserted us and gone over to the adverse party."

<sup>56</sup> It is quoted as 6 Geo. I., chap. 5, and comprises 17 sections.

continued to do so ever since, independently of its provisions. This protection, however, ought to be perpetuated by adequate legal enactments; and it is full time that the religious liberties of Irish Presbyterians and all other dissenters were based upon a more suitable and comprehensive statute, and secured by a less complex machinery than what is provided by the Toleration Act now in force.

The only other favour which this parliament could be induced to grant to the Presbyterians was of a still more paltry character. It was embodied in a bill, entitled, "An Act for quieting and discharging all persons in offices or employments from the penalties they may have incurred by not qualifying themselves pursuant to the act to prevent the further growth of Popery, and for limiting the time for prosecutions on the said act." This statute merely extended the time during which Presbyterians in office might qualify by taking the Sacramental Test to the 25th of March following; and it required all prosecutions for neglecting to take the sacrament in the Episcopal Church to be instituted within two years, and, when once begun, to be carried on without wilful delay. It is the earliest of those "bills of indemnity," as they were called, which were devised to reconcile the prejudices of the Tory party with the requirements of the age, ever in advance of them, and which for many years were annually passed in the British parliament, repealing the Test Act from year to year, until public opinion became so matured and potent as to demand and carry the final extinction of that persecuting statute. This Irish bill of indemnity did not originate in either house of parliament. It was sent over from England, and laid before parliament in the beginning of October. It passed through both houses without opposition, and received the royal assent, along with the Toleration Act, on the day on which the parliament was prorogued.<sup>57</sup> In the spring of the following year, the lord-lieutenant directed the attention of the ministry to the importance of renewing this act, and suggested the propriety of inserting a clause to that effect in an English act, the British

<sup>57</sup> It is 6 Geo. I., chap. 9.



parliament being then in session. But though nothing was done at this period, a similar act of indemnity, sometimes originating in the Irish commons, and more frequently sent over from England, was regularly passed in almost every succeeding session of parliament.

## CHAPTER XXV.

A.D. 1719-1726.

*Religious state of the Church in Ulster—Formation of the Belfast Society—Its principles—Alarm excited thereby—Policy of the Church—Synod of 1720—The Pacific Act—Violated at the installation of Mr. Haliday at Belfast—Measures consequent thereon—Agitated state of the Church—Synod of 1721—Declaration of belief in the Deity of Christ—Voluntary subscription of the Westminster Confession—Publications connected with this controversy—Differences of opinion as to the course to be pursued—Recommendation of ministers in Scotland—Synod of 1722—Its peaceable results—New congregation in Belfast—Collection in Glasgow for it—Opposed in the Sub-Synod of Belfast—Appeal of Colonel Upton, M.P.—Synod of 1723—Its proceedings—How treated in Belfast—Publications for and against subscription to the Confession—First communion in the new Belfast congregation—State of feeling throughout the Church—Additional controversial pieces—Origin of Mr. Nevin's affair—Synod of 1724—Trial of Mr. Nevin—Divisions in congregations—Publications by non-subscribers—Disputes in the Sub-Synod of Belfast—Further non-subscribing writings—Case of Colville of Dromore—Synod of 1725—Its proceedings in Colville's case—New arrangement of Presbyteries in the Belfast Sub-Synod—Sequel of Colville's affair—Additional publications—Overtures transmitted to Presbyteries—Pamphlets connected with them—Other controversial works—Synod of 1726—Non-subscribers offer expedients for peace—Overture rejecting these expedients—Debate thereon—The non-subscribing Presbytery excluded—Extent of this exclusion—Its results.*

WHILE the Presbyterians were thus unitedly struggling to secure their civil and religious liberties, a source of disunion had sprung up among themselves, the origin and results of which are now to be traced. Hitherto the Presbyterian Church in Ulster had peacefully reposed upon the same basis, and under the same standards, as the parent Church in Scotland. Both ministers and people were Presbyterians of the old school, warmly attached to all its principles and usages, and, for the most part, thoroughly

instructed in the controversies by which their Church had from time to time been tried. The ministers of the Irish synod, many of whom had been licentiates of the Scottish Church, and nearly all of them educated at her universities,<sup>1</sup> had cordially embraced the same theological doctrines with their Scottish brethren, and in their sessions, presbyteries, and synods, had closely followed the same system of discipline and government. The standard of ministerial attainments since the Revolution had been gradually rising, and stood higher at this period than it did during the remainder of the century. The people were carefully instructed in catechetical doctrine, were well versant in the Scriptures, and heartily approved of the Westminster Confession of Faith, as faithfully embodying the teaching of that infallible standard. At the commencement of the eighteenth century, not the slightest symptom had appeared of any departure from these doctrinal views, or of any alienation from the constitutional principles of Presbyterianism as established and practised in Scotland. On the contrary, repeated efforts were made to bring the Irish Church, as nearly as possible, to an identity of discipline and usage with the parent Church.

It was not long, however, until the same latitudinarian notions on the inferiority of dogmatic belief, and the nature of religious liberty, which had obtained currency on the Continent and in England, appeared in Ireland. Their introduction was principally owing to the Rev. John Abernethy, a young minister of undoubted talents and learning, of great metaphysical acumen and ready eloquence, who had received an excellent education, and who uniformly maintained a high character for piety and integrity.<sup>2</sup> He was ordained to the charge of the Presbyterian

<sup>1</sup> Many of the Irish ministers at this period not only passed through the Divinity Hall in one or other of the Scottish universities, but several of them finished their theological course at Leyden, in Holland. I find, from incidental notices, that the Rev. Robert M'Bride of Ballymoney, the Rev. Thomas Shaw of Ahoghill, and the Rev. Robert Craghead of Dublin, had studied at Leyden.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. John Abernethy, born in 1680, was the son of the Rev. John Abernethy, at that time minister of Brigh, in the county of Tyrone, afterwards of Moneymore, and latterly of Coleraine, where he settled in 1691,

congregation in the town of Antrim in the year 1703, and soon became remarkable, not only as a laborious and exemplary minister, but also as a diligent student. In the latter capacity he was the means, soon after his settlement at Antrim, of founding an association of ministers for mutual improvement in theological knowledge. He first obtained the co-operation of a few neighbouring brethren, the Rev. William Taylor of Randalstown, the Rev. Alexander Brown of Donegore, and the Rev. James Kirkpatrick of Templepatrick, at that time all young men, ordained within the previous six years. These were joined by the Rev. Thomas Orr of Comber, and the Rev. Alexander Colville of Dromore, by several licentiates and theological students, and by a few laymen of Belfast, among whom was Doctor Victor Ferguson, an eminent physician; and as that town was most conveniently situated for all these ministers, it became their stated place of meeting; and the association, which was finally organised

and died in 1703. At the Revolution, Mr. Abernethy, senior, was sent to London to wait on King William (see chap. xix., note 72, and text), and Mrs. Abernethy and her family, being obliged to fly from Moneymore before King James's troops, took refuge in Derry, where she endured all the perils and hardships of its memorable siege, and where she lost all her children. But her son John had, providentially, been previously conveyed by a friend at Ballymena to her father's in Scotland, Mr. Walkingshaw of that ilk, in the parish and county of Renfrew, where he spent three years at school before returning to his father's house in Coleraine. He entered the college of Glasgow in 1693, matriculated in the following February, and took the degree of M.A. about 1696. He studied divinity at Edinburgh, and was licensed by the presbytery of Route, March 3, 1702. He then spent some time in Dublin, just when the agitation caused by the discovery of Emlyn's Arianism was at its height, and was about to be ordained as colleague to the Rev. Mr. Boyse in Wood Street, in succession to Emlyn; but, unfortunately for the peace of the Presbyterian Church in Ulster, by his father's advice he resolved to settle in the North, and accepted the call from the congregation of Antrim, where he was ordained, August 18, 1703. His venerable father survived his ordination only three months. The reader, on comparing the account of the earlier portion of Mr. Abernethy's life given by Kippis in his edition of the "*Biographia Britannica*," which is the fullest that has appeared, with what I have related from authentic records, will see that several inaccuracies in dates and places have found their way into Kippis's and all previous biographies of this eminent man.



in the year 1705, became known as **THE BELFAST SOCIETY**. At their meetings, generally held monthly, each member preached in succession; chapters out of the Old and New Testaments, previously agreed upon, were read in the original languages, and their difficulties discussed; reviews and analyses of books read by the members since the previous meeting were given; and dissertations were read on important theological topics, especially on those questions which were then attracting the attention of divines elsewhere, and becoming the subjects of controversy. The sermons preached before the society, we are informed by one of its earliest members, treated of "the nature and Scriptural terms of the unity of the Christian Church, the nature and mischief of schism, the rights of conscience and of private judgment, the sole dominion of Christ in his own kingdom, the nature, power, and effects of excommunication, and other subjects of that kind."<sup>3</sup>

In this society were first promulgated many opinions hitherto new in Ireland, which, being at variance with both the doctrine and constitution of the Presbyterian Church, naturally excited, so soon as they became known, much attention, and gradually created no little disaffection and alarm. These opinions did not directly impugn any of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, as embodied in the Church's confession of faith, but they tended to undermine the entire system of a sinner's acceptance as taught therein, by placing that acceptance mainly on sincerity, by inculcating the innocency of error when not wilful, and by undervaluing all belief in positive doctrines as uncertain, or, at all events, as non-essential. In reference to ecclesiastical discipline, the members of the society taught, among other things, that the Church had no right to require candidates for the ministry to subscribe a confession of faith prepared by any man or body of men, and that such a required subscription was a violation of the right of private judgment, and inconsistent with Christian liberty

<sup>3</sup> Kirkpatrick's "Conclusion" to Duchal's "Sermon on the Death of Abernethy;" Belfast, 1741, 8vo, p. 50. See also "The Good Old Way," p. 6-8; and Ferguson's "Vindication of the Presbyterian Ministers in the North of Ireland," p. 13.

and true Protestantism. Most of these dogmas had already become prevalent among the Presbyterian Churches in Switzerland, and they were also spreading among the clergy, both established and dissenting, in the sister kingdom. In England, the writings of Whiston, Clarke, and Hoadley, followed by the debates and publications among the dissenters at Salter's Hall, showed how extensively these opinions had already been adopted. And in Scotland, the trial of the Rev. Mr. Simpson, professor of divinity in the University of Glasgow, before the General Assembly, during the years 1714, 1715, and 1716, for teaching several Arminian and Pelagian errors, and the lenient sentence pronounced upon him, but too clearly evinced that opinions equally erroneous and dangerous as those embraced elsewhere had also obtained currency among the Scottish clergy. The two leading members of the Belfast Society, Mr. Abernethy and Mr. Kirkpatrick, had been fellow-students with Professor Simpson in the Divinity Hall in Glasgow, and were afterwards regular correspondents of his, while most of the ministers who subsequently joined that society had studied theology under him as professor. No wonder, then, that similar opinions, on points both of doctrine and discipline, by means of this society, as a centre of union and influence, made their way into Ulster, where the prevalence of anti-Presbyterian views, especially regarding Church communion, had been much accelerated by the intercourse which had of late sprung up with the ministers of Dublin.<sup>4</sup> These brethren were, in all essential points, Independents, and therefore supported the Belfast Society in their opposition to the subscription of confessions of faith. The most painful circumstance connected with the progress of

<sup>4</sup> I refer to the ministers of the three congregations in Dublin who were never in ecclesiastical connection with the Synod of Ulster. These, together with about half-a-dozen dissenting congregations in the principal towns in the South, formed the presbytery of Dublin, called afterwards the Southern Presbytery of Dublin, when the synod, in the year 1726, had established a presbytery of its own in the metropolis. These Dublin ministers were mostly English dissenters; their so-called presbytery was merely a consultative meeting, and their ecclesiastical views were Congregational rather than Presbyterian.

these new opinions was the suspicion, very generally entertained both by the ministers and people, that they were associated with far more serious errors, affecting the very foundations of evangelical truth. It was confidently believed by many that several members of this society had early embraced the Arian views of Dr. Samuel Clarke. But although the general principles which they publicly professed had a natural, and, as the result in all churches has but too clearly proved, an unavoidable tendency to lead to that heresy, yet, if credit is to be attached to the most solemn asseverations of the leading members, frequently repeated, they were as yet free from any such error. This disquieting suspicion was entertained, not by the ill-informed, the prejudiced, or the illiterate, as the friends of the society confidently urged, but by enlightened and educated persons, who had the best means of information. Among these, assuredly, was Francis Hutcheson, son of the minister of Armagh, and afterwards the celebrated professor of moral philosophy in the University of Glasgow. He was at this time a licentiate, or preacher; and, writing to a friend in Scotland in the year 1718, he says—"I find by the conversations I have had with some ministers and comrades, that there is a perfect Hoadly mania among our younger ministers in the North; and what is really ridiculous, it does not serve them to be of his principles, but the pulpits are ringing with them, as if their hearers were all absolute princes going to impose tests and confessions in their several territories, and not a set of people entirely excluded from the smallest hand in the government any where, and utterly incapable of bearing any other part in persecution but as sufferers. I have reason, however, to apprehend that the antipathy to confessions is upon some other grounds than a new spirit of charity. Dr. Clarke's book [on the Trinity] I'm sufficiently informed has made several unfixed in their old principles, if not entirely altered them."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 132. This distinguished ethical philosopher and elegant writer entered the University of Glasgow about 1709, he matriculated in 1711, and took the degree of M.A. in 1712. He entered the Divinity Hall under Professor Simpson in the following year, but it does not appear how many sessions he attended there. He was appointed profes-

At the date of this letter, the Belfast Society had been joined by a dozen other young ministers, as they were successively ordained in congregations around that town, while its original founders had become the most prominent and influential ministers in the Church. The principal business of the synod was almost exclusively in their hands; and, from the year 1709, when their influence began to be felt, to the year 1716, not fewer than five out of the six earliest members of the society were appointed moderators of the synod. It is rather surprising that no publication connected with their peculiar views emanated from any of the members of this society till nearly fifteen years after its formation. At length Mr. Abernethy having preached a sermon before the society in Belfast, on Wednesday, the 9th of December 1719, published it in the spring of the following year, under the title of "Religious Obedience Founded on Personal Persuasion."<sup>6</sup> It was this discourse that began the unhappy controversy which continued throughout the next seven years with increasing asperity, and which called forth above fifty separate publications, and which ended in the exclusion of the members of the Belfast Society from the communion of the synod. In this sermon, Mr. Abernethy vented several of those new and dangerous opinions which it was alleged that society held, and the bare suspicion of which had caused much dissatisfaction. He taught that every man's persuasion of what was true and right was the sole rule of his faith and conduct—that there was no culpability in error after

sor of moral philosophy in 1730—the first native of Ireland who held a chair in the University of Glasgow. He died in 1746, and among his successors in this chair were Dr. Adam Smith and Dr. Thomas Reid—all men of European reputation.

<sup>6</sup> Belfast, 1720, 12mo, pp. 43. Mr. Abernethy had previously published two other sermons, the one preached in 1714, on the occasion of the accession of George I., on Psalm xx. 6, and the other, his synodical sermon, which was published with this title—"A Sermon Recommending the Study of Scripture Prophecy as an Important Duty, and a Great Means of Reviving Decayed Piety and Charity. Preached in Belfast, June 19, 1716, before the Presbyterian Ministers of the North of Ireland, met in their Annual Assembly. Published at the request of many of the hearers." Belfast, 1716, 4to, pp. 25. The text was Daniel, xii. 4.



what each man believed to be a deliberate and impartial investigation of the truth—that it was in the highest degree unjust and unscriptural to exclude from Christian fellowship any who walk according to their own persuasions, however palpably erroneous in the judgment of the Church on non-essential points—and that all doctrines were non-essential on which “human reason and Christian sincerity permitted men to differ.”

Before this discourse was in the hands of the public, a further revelation of the anti-Presbyterian views of this society had been made in the sub-synod which met in Belfast in January 1720. One of the more aged ministers, lamenting the divisions among the English dissenters at Salter’s Hall, and apprehensive lest the conduct of the Belfast Society might be the means of transferring to Ulster similar debates, and perhaps divisions, induced the meeting to hold a private conference with the members of that society then present, with a view to the preservation of peace and unity within their bounds. In this conference, all the brethren who belonged to the society freely announced their opposition to subscribing confessions of faith as tests of orthodoxy.<sup>7</sup> It also appeared that, in despite of the positive law of the synod, some presbyteries had taken upon them to sanction a lax mode of subscription, by which the law might have been evaded altogether, and the Church deprived of her security against the introduction of error among her ministers. So soon as these facts transpired, the surmise of a design to lay aside the use of the Westminster Confession of Faith, in the licensing and ordaining of ministers, began to be generally entertained, and added very much to the anxiety and alarm caused by the publication of Mr. Abernethy’s sermon. When the gauntlet was thus publicly thrown down, and the principles of evangelical truth and Presbyterian Church order openly impugned, it behoved the supporters of these principles to take it up, and come forward in their defence. In the literary contest, which was now unavoidable, it unfortunately happened that, with few exceptions, the advocates of the views maintained by the Church were inferior to the mem-

<sup>7</sup> Abernethy’s “Defence of his Seasonable Advice,” p. 24 ; with Master-ton’s “Apology for the Northern Presbyterians in Ireland,” p. 6.

bers of the Belfast Society in the arts both of logic and of rhetoric. The publications of the assailing party were superior in argumentative dexterity and the graces of style to those of their opponents, most of whom were forced into the contest, but little experienced in controversial dialectics. The contrast between the two classes of disputants was strongly marked at the very commencement of the discussion. The opponent of Mr. Abernethy was the Rev. John Malcome, M.A., the aged and most respectable minister of Dunmurry, near Belfast, who, in the end of May, published in a small tract what he called "Some Friendly Reflections" on the sermon in question, under the title of "Personal Persuasion no Ground for Religious Obedience."<sup>8</sup> In this tract he pointed out very clearly, though not very attractively or systematically, the dangerous nature of the novel views propounded by Mr. Abernethy, calling them "new-light"—an epithet by which they were henceforth designated. Among the reasons he adduces in his preface for engaging in the controversy, the following is one:—"That I may awaken some of my reverend brethren to give a more full and learned answer to the same sermon; by which I hope our brethren who may have left us, may be at length brought to see that conscience has no such supremacy as to thrust out the government and discipline of the Church of Christ." No second defender, however, appeared, probably owing to the admonition of the synod, which met soon after, not to prolong these disputes through the medium of the press. Neither did Mr. Abernethy resume the pen in defence of his views.<sup>9</sup> But the Belfast Society felt they could not be silent,

<sup>8</sup> Belfast, 1720, 18mo, pp. 35. At this date Mr. Robert Gardner, a second printer, had commenced his trade in Belfast, and as the earlier printer, Mr. James Blow, took part with the opponents of the synod, and printed and published all the non-subscribers' works, the former tradesman became the printer for the subscribers.

<sup>9</sup> The Belfast Society, in a publication of theirs, in December of this year, thus accounted for Mr. Abernethy's silence:—"He had formed a design of publishing some illustrations of those principles and parts of his sermon at which some were offended:—but he delayed the execution of that design, waiting for the publication of an answer to it, which he is certainly informed

after the plain-spoken pamphlet of Mr. Malcome, who had described them as a body that "had suddenly separated from their brethren," and had called upon them to furnish the Church with "a scheme of their new doctrine." They accordingly published, in the month of June, a formal letter to Mr. Malcome, entitled—"The Good Old Way, or a Vindication of some Important Scripture Truths, and all who Preach them, from the Imputation of Novelty."<sup>10</sup> In this well-written letter, the society give a full account of their origin, and of the questions usually discussed at their meetings. The opinions entertained by them on private judgment, the headship of Christ, the terms of communion, the extent of Church authority, and the nature of fundamental doctrines in religion—all of which they repudiate as novel—are very plausibly propounded, and at first sight might be admitted as true, when stated in the general terms which they employ; but when understood in the sense, and applied to the purposes which they afterwards claimed for them, they must be acknowledged to be both erroneous in themselves, and hitherto new in Ireland. They then defend Mr. Abernethy's doctrine of personal persuasion against the alleged mistakes of Mr. Malcome, and conclude by declaring their "fervent desire to live in love and in constant communion" with their brethren, though they were at the same time giving the most serious offence to these brethren by their crude speculations and dangerous theories.

These publications, coupled with the hostility to subscribing the Westminster Confession of Faith avowed in the Belfast synod, confirmed the suspicions of the members of the Church throughout the province, and occasioned no little alarm. This feeling was still farther heightened by private letters from several members of the society, which were in circulation among the ministers, acknowledging doubts regarding the Deity of the Saviour, and asserting that, even if true, it was by no means a

is prepared by a clergyman of the Established Church." (Narrative of Seven Synods, p. 30.) Whether such an answer was published, I have not been able to learn.

<sup>10</sup> Belfast, 1720, 18mo, pp. 16. There are no signatures attached to the letter; the title-page merely says—"By the Belfast Society."

fundamental doctrine.<sup>11</sup> That a number of ministers had seriously departed from the recognised views of the Church on important points was now but too evident, and her office-bearers and members could no longer refrain from anxiously considering how it became them to act in this painful emergency. Three different courses were open to the synod—either to separate at once and peaceably from these innovating brethren, if they persisted in opposing the doctrine and discipline of the Church; or to permit them, if they themselves saw fit, to remain in communion with the synod, but at the same time to adhere with firmness to the existing laws regulating the admission of ministers, so as to prevent for the future any persons holding similar views from intruding into the ministerial office; or, lastly, to alter the terms of admission, in order to adapt them to the scruples of these brethren, and thus prevent a schism in the Church. Unfortunately the last of these courses was adopted by the synod, under the advice of her most experienced members. Better far would it have been for the interests of truth, the peace of the Church, and her future prosperity, had either of the other two expedients been preferred. It ought to be remembered, however, that the brethren whose counsels were followed by the synod had not the experience which we now have of the fruitless results of all such temporising expedients for preserving peace and unity, where important doctrinal differences exist. Neither could they have anticipated the fatal development of error which has almost invariably resulted from such unsound and latitudinarian views as those held by their brethren of the Belfast Society. Besides,

<sup>11</sup> The following extract from one of these letters will suffice to corroborate this statement. A member of the Belfast Society, writing to a friend in November 1719, says—"I doubt not but that all who repent and reform their lives and sincerely accept of Christ as their Redeemer, will attain to eternal life, although they be ignorant of his supreme Deity, if so be that doctrine be truth; or if they believe him to be the supreme God, if so be the orthodox doctrine, as it is called, be false. For I do not find that it is required in Scripture, as a term of salvation, to believe that Christ is the absolutely supreme God.—And therefore so long as I believe the doctrine about which I am in doubts is not fundamental, I think I may safely continue to preach. See the "Narrative of the Non-Subscribers Examined," p. 23.



they believed these brethren to be sincere in holding the essential doctrines of the Gospel; for who could doubt their solemn and repeated asseverations to that effect? They conceived it quite possible that this soundness in the faith might continue to co-exist with erroneous views on the province of human reason, the rights of conscience, and the terms of Christian communion, for they had not seen this notion disproved, as it has since so fully been, by the experience of all Presbyterian communities who have ventured to act upon it. Still further, they saw in these erring brethren some of their most active, laborious, learned, and influential ministers, and they very naturally dreaded that the interests of Presbyterianism would suffer by a schism in their body, which would array those men in jealous opposition to the synod. We now see clearly the unhappy results of the mistaken policy which these hopes and fears induced the synod to adopt. Not only was it the cause of bitter contentions for the next six years, to the neglect of the proper business of the Church and the scandal of Presbyterianism, while it utterly failed, after all, in preventing a schism; but when that separation did at last occur, it was based upon such narrow and insufficient grounds, and so many fatal concessions had been made to the scruples of the excluded brethren, which were not retracted, as they should have been, at the period of the rupture, that too wide a door was left open, through which many unsuitable persons continued to be admitted to the ministry. The consequence was, that, in a very few years, similar errors, under the form of Arminianism, had again crept into the high places of the synod, which, in the unvarying cycle of the development of error, culminated during the present century in Arianism and Socinianism.

This mistaken policy on which the Church was induced to act was fully developed at the first synod that took cognisance of the matter, and that met at Belfast in the end of June 1720. The meeting was opened by a sermon from the late moderator, the Rev. Robert Craghead, one of the ministers of Dublin.<sup>12</sup> He

<sup>12</sup> Mr. Craghead was the son of the Rev. Robert Craghead, minister first of Donoughmore, in the county of Donegall, and latterly of Derry (see chap. xx.), where he died in 1711. Mr. Craghead, junior, was born at the former place

warmly supported the temporising policy of the synod, principally on the ground that the views of the members of the Belfast Society, even if erroneous, involved only points of inferior importance, and that they ought to be freely tolerated in the Church so long as they held, as he was convinced they did, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the other leading truths of the Gospel. "Truth," he says, "is never to be parted with, nor our Christian liberty given up. But about the means of preserving the one, and the restraints which ought in particular instances to be laid on the other, good men may think very differently.— We have no debate whether truth and liberty ought to be inviolably maintained. The chief difference is about the proper method to be taken for that end." His opening sermon accordingly inculcated this view at considerable length, and with much earnestness and eloquence. He afterwards published it with this title—"A Plea for Peace, or the Nature, Causes, Mischief, and Remedy of Church Divisions."<sup>13</sup> It is an excellent

in 1684, matriculated in the University of Glasgow in 1700, where he took the degree of M. A. about 1702; he studied divinity at Edinburgh and Leyden, and was ordained as colleague to Mr. Iredell in Capel Street, or Mary's Abbey, Dublin, October 11, 1709. He died in that charge July 30, 1738.

<sup>13</sup> Dublin, reprinted at Belfast, 1721, 8vo, pp. 32. Mr. Craghead had previously published "A Funeral Sermon from Rev. xiv. 13, on occasion of the death of the Right Honourable Catharine, Countess Dowager of Granard, who died December 9th, 1714: Preached in Capel Street." Dublin, 1714, 4to, pp. 28. It is dedicated to the Countess of Donegall, daughter of the deceased. Lady Granard had long been a regular member of Capel Street Church. Mr. Abernethy's sermon in 1716 (see note 6 of this chapter), and this one by Mr. Craghead, were the only synodical sermons published since Mr. M'Bride's in the year 1698. It is but justice to Mr. Craghead to exhibit his sound views on the doctrine of the Trinity, as set forth in the following extract from the synodical discourse:—"It is a matter of great lamentation that so many of the ancient heresies should be revived in our day, by which the Church has been and is like to be troubled in the same manner the primitive Church was before us. That heresy which spread the farthest and prevailed the longest has of late been raised from the dead, and already appears with very formidable aspect. Many have been drawn away, many have been brought to deny the Lord that brought them, I mean his Divinity, in doing which they do, in effect, raze the foundation. They degrade the glorious Son of God from his just dignity and honour, and invalidate the

discourse, but inapplicable to the state of the Church; for the points in dispute, however disguised under plausible and ambiguous phraseology, were not of secondary but of primary importance, and, as has since been fully proved, involved the vital interests of evangelical truth and Christian liberty.

This synod was attended by one hundred and fifteen ministers and eighty-six elders, with corresponding members from the southern presbytery of Dublin. The Rev. Gilbert Kennedy, minister of Donacloney, or Tullylish, who afterwards distinguished himself as a writer on behalf of subscription, was elected moderator. The first thing which engaged their attention, connected with the existing controversy, was a reference from the presbytery of Belfast. It appears that the Rev. Samuel Dunlop, minister of Athlone, had been in London in the spring of this year, when the Salter's Hall debates were at their height, and when the dissenting ministers were divided into subscribers of the doctrine of the Trinity and non-subscribers. The Rev. Samuel Haliday was also in London at this time, and, as those who know his subsequent career and writings will readily believe, his sympathies and convictions were all on the side of the non-subscribers, however he may have abstained from taking any public part in the debates; and, therefore, in common with most of that party, he was suspected of Arianism—a suspicion which was certainly unwarranted in his case, and that of many others of the English non-subscribers. In the beginning of this year, the old congregation of Belfast, vacant since the death of that venerable minister, the Rev. John M'Bride, in 1718, had presented a call to Mr. Haliday, which was then passing through the usual forms in the presbytery of Belfast. Under these circumstances, Mr. Dunlop, participating in the suspicions of Arianism, so generally entertained towards the non-subscribing party and their sup-

satisfaction made by him, on which all our expectations as Christians do entirely depend. But how much soever their pernicious error prevails and how much trouble soever it has given, and is like to give the Churches of God, this may be one ground of comfort to us—that not so much as one among ourselves, either of ministers or people so far as we know, has hitherto been corrupted with it;" pp. 12, 13.

porters, had written to a friend in the vicinity of Belfast expressing his belief that, from what he saw and heard of Mr. Haliday in London, he was an Arian, and, from a conversation he had with him, that he was an enemy to all Church government. This letter, having been shown to some of the members of the Belfast congregation who had called Mr. Haliday, created, as was to be expected, great uneasiness. The presbytery found it necessary to inquire into the matter; they communicated with Mr. Haliday in London, and with Mr. Dunlop, then in Ireland, and ultimately referred the case to be issued by the synod, when both of these ministers would be present. A full investigation now took place, when it plainly appeared that Mr. Dunlop had no ground for imputing Arianism to Mr. Haliday, who had cautiously refrained from identifying himself with either party in London, and who produced a letter, signed by leading ministers on both sides, fully exonerating him from any suspicion of that heresy. The charge of being an enemy to Church government the synod considered to be also disproved, by the evidence of several gentlemen, personal friends of Mr. Haliday, who deposed to his having "signified an hearty approbation of Presbyterian government, and particularly of the Church of Scotland;" yet, in a very few years, he advocated principles which effectually overthrew all Church authority in the important matter of doctrine, and so far subverted the constitution of the Scottish Church. The synod agreed to the following resolutions in this case, and appointed them to be read and explained to the congregation in Belfast on the following Sabbath:—"I. That the Rev. Samuel Haliday has sufficiently cleared his innocency, and fully vindicated himself from the aspersions of Arianism and militating against all Church government, to the great satisfaction of this synod. II. That Mr. Dunlop be rebuked for his rash and imprudent behaviour in this affair."<sup>14</sup>

Having thus done justice to Mr. Haliday, the synod took into consideration the state of alarm and apprehension into which recent events had plunged the great body of the people. Their

<sup>14</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod.



fears were directed against the two evils of non-subscription and of Arianism, which they felt unable to disjoin from one another, and which, from what they had lately heard and read, they believed to be on the eve of invading their beloved Church. On these topics they felt much more keenly than the ministers, while they were both more unanimous and more unreserved in expressing their suspicions and fears. These may have been somewhat premature, and the evidence on which they rested may then have been insufficient. Yet such apprehensions were not only excusable under the circumstances, but in a few years the result showed they were only too well founded. Much obloquy was cast upon the people by the Belfast Society and its friends, for their unreasonable jealousies and their uncalled-for anxiety about the teaching of their ministers. But woe to that Church whose lay members are careless whether their ministers advocate or oppose evangelical truth! Such indifference has invariably preceded and encouraged the growth of error; while, on the other hand, many a Church—as the Irish Church at this crisis—has been saved from declension by the timely vigilance and the honest zeal and earnestness, even though at times rude or indiscreet, of its unsophisticated and well-instructed laity.

To allay the agitation and alarm which now pervaded all classes, the wisest and most effectual course would have been to have adhered steadily to the constitutional law of the Church, in requiring simple subscription to her standards, and to have abolished the unauthorised practice, which had recently grown up in one or two presbyteries, of receiving reservations and explanations. This firm course might, perhaps, have caused the separation of a few ministers and their congregations, but even this unhappy result would have been less calamitous than it proved to be six years later; and, at the same time, it would have at once allayed all jealousies within the body, and convinced the world of the sincere adherence of the synod to her standards. But the course which was adopted at this meeting, though recommended by the spirit of charity and forbearance which dictated it, only led to new encroachments on her discipline, and increased the dissatisfaction of both ministers and people in all

parts of the province ; while the very persons whose scruples it was intended to remove, and who unanimously supported it,<sup>15</sup> afterwards upbraided the synod for having acted uncandidly towards them on this occasion.<sup>16</sup> The first measure which this synod adopted to meet the present emergency is known by the name of THE PACIFIC ACT, which, while it professed to adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and renewed the law enjoining subscription to it, concluded by legalising the practice of receiving explanations of objectionable phrases, and thus sanctioned and encouraged further departures from it. This important ACT is as follows :—"Whereas there has been a surmise of a design to lay aside the Westminster Confession of Faith and our larger and shorter catechisms, we of this synod do unanimously declare that none of us have or had such a design; but on the contrary, as we still adhere to the said confession and catechisms, so we do earnestly recommend to all under our care to have in their custody and carefully peruse them and train up their children in the knowledge of them : And if any have spoken disrespectfully or tending to disparage them, we strictly forbid any such thing to be done for the future, and that our people should be assured of this as the unanimous judgment of the synod for removing all jealousies they have had of any person on that account : And we heartily recommend and enjoin the said confession (as being a very good abridgment of the Christian doctrines contained in the sacred Scriptures) to be observed according to an act of the General Synod in the year 1705; [here a copy of this act requiring simple subscription to the confession is inserted], which is thus to be understood as now is practised by the presbyteries, that if any person called upon to subscribe shall scruple any phrase or phrases in the confession, he shall have leave to use his own expressions which the presbytery shall accept of, providing they judge such a person sound in the faith, and that such expressions are consistent with the substance of the doctrine, and that such explications shall be in-

<sup>15</sup> Masterton's "Apology," p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> "Narrative of the Seven Synods," p. 6.

serted in the presbytery books : And that this be a rule not only in relation to candidates licensed by ourselves but to all intrants into the ministry among us, tho' they have been licensed or ordained elsewhere."<sup>17</sup>

The other measures of this synod, partly framed by the members of the Belfast Society,<sup>18</sup> were wiser and more judicious. By one of these, the synod entreated ministers, for one year at least, not to publish anything connected with this rising controversy without consulting the more judicious of their brethren—a recommendation which was so far faithfully observed, that no publication appeared until after the subsequent meeting of synod. By another act, ministers were directed to insist in their preaching “on the great and fundamental truths of Christianity according to the Westminster Confession of Faith.” It is necessary to give the synod’s enumeration of these truths, in order to place beyond doubt what they meant in their Pacific Act by being “sound in the faith,” and by adhering to “the substance of the doctrines” contained in that confession. These “great and fundamental truths of Christianity” were—“the being and providence of God and the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures ; the necessary doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity in the unity of the Godhead, particularly the eternal Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ as being of the same substance with the Father, and equal in power and glory, and of the satisfaction he made to Divine justice, who is only our propitiation ; of regeneration by efficacious grace ; of free justification by the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ received by faith alone ; of original sin ; of the morality of the Sabbath ; the necessity of a holy life in order to the obtaining of everlasting salvation ; and such like important doctrines.” Lastly, by a third act, the synod endeavoured to allay the jealousies which, no one can doubt, were too prevalent at this conjuncture, and too readily entertained by both ministers and people, by exhorting all parties to be on their guard against hasty suspicions, to observe the Scriptural rule of first communi-

<sup>17</sup> Thompson’s “ Abstract,” p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> Stirling MS. Letters, vol. iv., No. 122.

eating any evil report against a brother to himself, before presuming it to be true, and to "deal frankly and openly with one another on all such occasions."<sup>19</sup> It was confidently believed that all causes of offence had now been removed, and concord and mutual confidence restored to the Church. With these feelings, the synod empowered a committee, of which the brethren of the Belfast Society were the leading members,<sup>20</sup> to recommend peace and mutual charity to the contending ministers in London; and, in their letter on this occasion, they informed these brethren of the happy results of this meeting, and that the synod had "fallen into such peaceful measures as they hoped would strengthen and perpetuate their own good agreement."<sup>21</sup>

But all these hopes were disappointed within one "little month," through the deliberate violation of the Pacific Act, by the very party at whose suggestion, and for whose relief, it had been so recently enacted. The call to Mr. Haliday from the Belfast congregation was duly proceeded with by the presbytery, and his installation was fixed for the 28th of July. On the day of installation, Mr. Haliday refused to avail himself of the provisions of the Pacific Act, or to subscribe the Confession of Faith in any form. He tendered to the presbytery the following meagre and unsatisfactory declaration of his faith, and insisted that no Church had a right to demand any fuller confession:—"I sincerely believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the only rule of revealed religion, a sufficient test of orthodoxy or soundness in the faith, and to settle all the terms of ministerial and Christian communion, to which nothing may be added by any synod, assembly or council whatsoever: And I find all the essential articles of the Christian doctrine to be contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith; which articles I

<sup>19</sup> These acts may be seen in Thompson's "Abstract," pp. 26 and 27.

<sup>20</sup> "Narrative of the Non-Subscribers Examined," p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> This letter from the synod to the dissenting ministers in London is given in the "Narrative of Seven Synods," pp. 7-11. It was afterwards alleged that the members of the Belfast Society had not only drawn up this letter as already stated, but that they had also sent it off without having been signed by the moderator. See "Some General Remarks on Dr. Ferguson's Vindication," p. 3 of the preface.



receive upon the sole authority of the Holy Scriptures."<sup>22</sup> Strange to say, through the influence of Mr. Kirkpatrick and the other members of presbytery who belonged to the Belfast Society, the majority resolved, in direct violation of the law of synod, to receive this confession as satisfactory; and though four members of presbytery protested against this resolution, and appealed to the sub-synod of Belfast, the installation was proceeded with, and Mr. Haliday was thus, with a high hand, intruded into the ministry of the Church, in manifest contravention of all its laws and usages.

Such was the first fruits of the accommodating policy adopted by the late synod! Its Pacific Act, from the operation of which so much peace and concord was expected, was violated almost before the ink that recorded it was dry. Of what use were terms of communion, and rules for the trial and admission of ministers, however stringent on paper, when they might thus be set aside, and, it may be, the most obnoxious ministers obtruded on the Church? Was it any wonder that the ministers and people who were warmly attached to Presbyterian government, and to the Confession of Faith, as a test and safeguard of the truth, should be seriously alarmed by this unconstitutional act of the Belfast presbytery? The crisis was of such an urgent nature as demanded a prompt and vigorous vindication of the authority of the Church. Mr. Kennedy, the moderator, as might be expected from his character, was anxious that some such step should be immediately taken, and, with that view, he intimated to the presbyteries his intention of convoking a special synod. But the friends of the Belfast Society again interfered with their expedients for peace. They procured a meeting of the synod's committee, to be held at Newry in the end of September, which

<sup>22</sup> I have seen an original copy of this confession, dated "Belfast, July 27th, 1720," and signed, as he still wrote his name, "Sam. Hollyday." He afterwards published it in page v. of the preface to his "Reasons against Subscription." In this, his first publication, he spelled his name *Haliday*, which he retained in his other works, and by which he has since been known. His sons, Robert and Alexander, used the same form when inscribing their names in the album of the University of Glasgow.

was attended also by ministers from Dublin, with the view of preventing this proposed meeting of synod, and they succeeded. They alleged that such a meeting would only increase the ferment in the Church, and that the irregular procedure of the presbytery in Mr. Haliday's installation might be safely left to the ordinary course of discipline. At the same time, some of the leading ministers present recommended the Belfast Society to dissolve their association, at least for the present, as a likely way to allay the jealousies they had awakened, and restore mutual confidence. This recommendation was at once repudiated by the society, strengthened as it now was by the addition of Mr. Haliday, and of another very active disciple of the party, the Rev. John Mairs,<sup>23</sup> who, in the month of February of this year, had succeeded his father of the same name in the congregation of Newtownards. They felt it necessary, however, to appear once more in their own vindication; and, in the first week of December, they prepared a long and carefully composed letter, a copy of which they sent to each presbytery in the North, and to the one in Dublin, relating the rise and progress of their now famous society, vindicating themselves from the charges urged against them of being enemies to the confession, and of violating the constitution, and destroying the peace of the Church; enumerating the grievances to which they were exposed, and their reasons for declining to adopt the recommendation of the Newry committee to dissolve their association; and concluding with their standing exhortation to concord and unity, which they must have known would be ineffectual so long as they persisted in opposing the known principles of the synod as a subscribing body.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Mr. Mairs, junior, entered the University of Glasgow in 1710, took the degree of M.A. in 1713, and in the following year entered the Divinity Hall under Professor Simpson. He is the minister alluded to by Kennedy, in his "Defence of the Synod," in answer to Haliday's reasons against subscription (introduction, p. 11), as impugning the received doctrine of the Trinity. The reader may see Mr. Mairs' reply in Haliday's "Letter to Kennedy," pp. 56-66.

<sup>24</sup> This circular letter may be seen in the "Narrative of Seven Synods," pp. 18-33. It was signed by the society's president and scribe, but their names are not given.

This circular letter elicited no reply from any of the northern presbyteries. There can be no doubt it entirely failed in removing the dissatisfaction and alarm that prevailed throughout the province; and all parties now looked forward to the sub-synod of Belfast to vindicate the authority and uphold the law of the Church, which had been so openly violated at Mr. Haliday's installation. That provincial synod met in the first week of January 1721, and it augured ill for a satisfactory settlement of the question, that Mr. Haliday was absent, having gone to England, it was surmised, on purpose to evade this meeting, when the protest against his installation fell to be considered. The proceedings on this occasion will be best related in the words of a member of the synod, in a letter to a friend in Scotland. "The quarterly synod met at Belfast this last week; before whom the protest of the [four] brethren of the presbytery against Mr. Kirkpatrick and those that joined with him in installing Mr. Haliday contrary to the act of the General Synod, came to be considered. The synod was kept by harangues and debates from Tuesday until Thursday, and to four of the clock on Friday morning, before they could come to consider the reasons of the protest. But when they were considered, they were approved by all but the members of the society, and the installing party were publickly rebuked. They so far submitted that they said, for preventing trouble, they would not appeal; but they openly declared that their conscience could not allow them to subscribe the confession nor submit to the act of the synod. The synod [of Belfast] took no further notice of Mr. Haliday. He is expected over from England, but whether he will proceed now upon the installment and so enter and act as the minister of the congregation of Belfast, is not yet known."<sup>25</sup> When Mr. Haliday returned and appeared in the presbytery, the protesting members produced the resolution of the sub-synod finding his installation to have been irregularly performed, and called upon him to comply with the law of the Church, by subscribing the confession in the usual form. But he again resolutely refused;

<sup>25</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 136.

and the majority of the presbytery, who still favoured Mr. Halliday, dreading that another protest would be made against his taking his seat as a member until he had obeyed the law, hastily adjourned the presbytery, and so this unhappy case was permitted to stand over until the annual meeting of the General Synod.<sup>26</sup> During these unsatisfactory occurrences, the moderator of synod, Mr. Kennedy of Tullylish, had opened a friendly correspondence with Mr. Abernethy on the subject of subscription to a prepared confession, on which they had held some conversation at the meeting of committee at Newry. A number of long and ably written letters passed between them, which have been fortunately preserved. Mr. Kennedy argued the question in favour of subscription with great ability, and in a style decidedly superior to the work which he afterwards published on the same subject. He obtained some important admissions, which well nigh conceded the point in dispute, from Mr. Abernethy, who conducted the correspondence with his well-known talent and subtilty, and in a most becoming spirit. He did not, however, reply to Mr. Kennedy's last letter, which was written in the end of March, and thus the controversy was left unfinished.<sup>27</sup>

It may seem strange at the present day that Mr. Kennedy did not publish any of these excellent letters, and that no attempt was made from the press by any other faithful minister of the synod (at a time, too, when there was not a single newspaper in the province) to draw the attention of the public to the critical state of the Church. Perhaps this silence may be attributed to the prudent recommendation of the last synod, procured through the influence of the Belfast Society and its friends, not to rush hastily to the press on these disputes. It is certain that party continued to be on the alert to prevent all public discussion of their measures. With that view, they had succeeded in preventing a special meeting of the synod; and it is a singular fact,

<sup>26</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 145, in the latter part of the letter.

<sup>27</sup> The preservation of these letters is owing to the indefatigable Wodrow, who copied them from the originals, and his transcript is deposited among his papers in the Advocates' library. I have also procured a copy of them.



illustrative of this policy, that when Mr. M'Cracken of Lisburn had put to press, in Dublin, a pamphlet on the present state of the Church, "giving the reasons, rise, and progress of our debates," it forthwith came to the knowledge of the leading men on the other side, Mr. Boyse and Mr. Kirkpatrick, and the latter succeeded in prevailing on the venerable author to withdraw it, on the plea—so inconsistent as coming from them—of its being calculated to stir up strife, and inflame the minds of the people<sup>28</sup>—a strange position for a Church to be placed in, to have her discipline in a vital point deliberately overthrown, and her peace fatally disturbed, by a few ministers, and yet to have every effort of her faithful members to vindicate and defend her arrested on the pretext of a regard for her peace and unity!

These efforts, however, to prevent open discussion produced their invariable results, in increasing dissatisfaction and exciting further suspicions. The agitated state of the Church at this crisis is strikingly disclosed in the following extract from a letter by the Rev. George Lang of Loughbrickland, one of the most candid and peace-loving ministers of the synod.<sup>29</sup> Writing to the historian Wodrow, in the end of May, he says—"I am very glad to hear that your divisions are healed. I wish I could give you the same account of ours, which I'm afraid, if some on both sides do not collect a better temper and more moderate sentiments, will certainly rend us in pieces and end in the separation of some members from our body; the distant prospect of which, with all its lamentable consequences, occasions many sad thoughts to all who have the interest of religion and the peace of the

<sup>28</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., Nos. 137 and 141.

<sup>29</sup> Mr. Lang was the son of the Rev. George Lang of Newry, whose wife was the daughter of the Rev. Bernard Sanderson, minister of a parish in Scotland. After studying philosophy in the University of Glasgow, and divinity in that of Edinburgh, he was licensed to preach by the presbytery of Down in 1700, and was ordained in Loughbrickland on the 5th of April 1701. His father died in January following. He was forty years minister at Loughbrickland, where he died May 29, 1741. His funeral sermon was preached and published by the Rev. James Moody, then minister of Newry, but who had been previously minister at Magherally, near Loughbrickland.

Church at heart. The aversion of some among us to our confession as a term of ministerial communion, and indeed to all fixed tests of orthodoxy seems rather to increase: and what is far worse, we are not free of some apprehensions of Arianism having got some footing among us; some gentlemen taking the liberty to argue for it, and some ministers have not scrupled to say they would not refuse to communicate with an Arian. The fears of this detestable heresy which saps the very foundations of the Christian faith make some ministers, (otherwise moderate) inflexible as to any further concessions than what the Pacific Act of last General Synod doth allow. But however it be as to Arianism, I'm pretty sure that several ministers incline to the Arminian principles. A suspicion of such things with zeal for our confession of faith has occasioned whole presbyteries, as Tyrone and Augher, to subscribe it. And in the beginning of this month the sub-synod of Derry, four or five ministers excepted,<sup>30</sup> did the same. Our presbytery of Armagh have not yet thought fit to take any such step. For tho' we are of the same judgment concerning the confession (abating some phrases in two or three articles not essential nor important, which some scruple), yet we dislike the manner of it, supposing it the business of the General Synod to direct in matters of so general concernment to the whole Church. A general subscription or some declaration equal to it, I find, will be promoted at the synod by many ministers; and the people who are greatly alarmed, I believe, will expect some such thing. The manner of the [Belfast] Society's propagating their principles in public sermons and otherwise hath so inflamed the generality of the people and made them so jealous of ministers, that those who incline to moderate and peaceable methods have a very difficult part to act; considering also the declared resolutions of the members of the society not to depart from the principles they have taken up, and to hazard all rather than yield."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Of these four or five non-subscribers in the sub-synod of Derry, it is evident from their subsequent conduct that the following were three:—The Rev. John Elder of Aghadoey, the Rev. Robert Higinbotham of Coleraine, and the Rev. Nehemiah Donaldson of Derg.

<sup>31</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 145.

It was, therefore, in the midst of much anxiety and many apprehensions that, in a month after the date of this letter, the synod held its annual meeting at Belfast. It was attended by one hundred and twenty ministers, including three corresponding brethren from the southern presbytery at Dublin, and by one hundred elders, indicating the deep interest which the eldership of the Church took in her present critical state. This feeling was especially manifested immediately after the opening of the meeting, by the presentation of memorials from the sessions of seventeen congregations, distributed over no fewer than seven counties of Ulster, supplicating the supreme court that, in order to silence the aspersions of enemies, and remove the apprehensions of her own people, "all the members of the synod and all inferior judicatories of the Church may be obliged to subscribe the Westminster Confession of Faith as the confession of their faith." Under these unusual circumstances, two measures were conceived to be necessary—the one to rebut the charge now urged by the Episcopalians and others, that the Presbyterian Church had departed from her early faith, and the doctrine of all the reformed Churches, on the supreme Deity of the Saviour; the other, to satisfy her own members that, so far from having renounced her symbolical books, she not only required them to be faithfully subscribed by all future candidates, but recommended her existing ministers to renew their previous subscription.

To meet the former object the following resolution was brought forward:—"Whereas several aspersions have been cast upon the Protestant dissenters of our communion in this kingdom, as if they had made defection from the commonly received doctrine concerning the essential Deity of the Son of God by denying his essential Divine perfections, particularly his necessary existence, absolute eternity and independence; which doctrine has been always regarded by this synod as an essential<sup>32</sup> article of the Christian faith, and which this synod still adheres to as such:—

<sup>32</sup> When this declaration was first framed, this word was *fundamental*, but, at the request of some friends of the Belfast Society, it was changed to *essential*, in the hope of inducing them to join in it more willingly. "Review of the Presbytery of Antrim's Letter," p. 55.

We therefore unanimously declare that the said aspersions are, as far as we know, groundless. And it is our resolution, if any person or persons shall hereafter deny the said article as above expressed, by preaching or writing or in conversation, to proceed against him or them according to the laws of the Gospel and the known practice of this Church, and not to own him or them as members of this Church." This resolution was "read, paragraph by paragraph, three several times;" and, after some alterations, it was approved, and ordered to be printed on a separate sheet, and extensively circulated. It was not, however, unanimously adopted. For, though the Dublin ministers cordially concurred both in framing and in voting for it, the members of the Belfast Society again took refuge under their cardinal principle of religious liberty, and refused to adopt it. The minutes of synod state that they declined voting for it—"not because they disbelieved the article of Christ's supreme Deity; for this article they professed in the strongest terms to believe. But because they are against all authoritative human decisions as tests of orthodoxy, and because they judged such decisions unseasonable at this time"—a very subtle distinction, truly, to feel at liberty to profess "in the strongest terms" their belief in a doctrine, and yet to feel it to be a grievous infringement of Christian liberty to concur with their brethren in a resolution to the same effect! It must be added, also, that, in this debate, several of the society drew another nice distinction, which tended still further to raise doubts, even in the minds of the most candid, of the soundness in the faith of those who urged it. They distinguished between the truth of the doctrine of the Saviour's Deity, which they professed to hold, and its being an essential or fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, the belief of which was necessary to Christian or ministerial communion, which they denied—a distinction which, if carried out in harmony with their doctrine of personal persuasion, prepared them for admitting to the ordinances, and even the ministry of the Church, an Arian or Socinian.

To allay the fears of the members of the Church, a second measure was proposed, namely, not to enjoin, but simply to permit, all the members of synod, who were willing to do so. to sub-



scribe the Westminster Confession of Faith. This proposal raised a long and violent debate, which continued from early in the forenoon of Saturday until nine o'clock at night. The members of the Belfast Society produced all their new-born arguments against subscribing any human formula, of which most of them were ignorant in 1716, when they agreed to subscribe either this same confession, or another human formula, as the basis of a toleration. On the other hand, the true friends of the peace and welfare of the Church urged this voluntary subscription as indispensable to vindicate her character, and lay the foundation for mutual confidence and lasting concord. As the debate drew toward a close, the opponents of the measure, perceiving they were unable to prevent its being carried, changed their policy, and endeavoured to postpone the debate until the following week, when few of the ministers from the remoter districts, who were its staunch supporters, would be present, and the members in its favour would be considerably lessened. But their motion for an adjournment being negatived by an overwhelming majority, they entered a protest on the minutes merely against coming to a vote at that time, which was signed by twelve ministers and only four elders. The original motion for a voluntary subscription was then carried by an equally decided majority, but that party did not offer any protest on this occasion. Two ministers only, both of whom were subscribers, dissented from it, on the not unreasonable ground of its being an unusual method of issuing offences, and contrary to the rules of discipline prescribed in the Word of God.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> One of these dissentients was the Rev. Mr. Iredell of Dublin, and, in justice to the memory of this venerable minister, I subjoin his dissent in his own words, as entered in the Minutes of Synod :—" In the year 1688 at my ordination [in Donegore] I did openly own my assent to the Westminster Confession of Faith as the confession of my faith. To this assent by the grace of God I have adhered and do adhere. But since, as I humbly conceive the vote passed on Saturday last countenances a method of issuing scandals or offences, real or supposed, not agreeable to the rules of discipline prescribed in the Word of God, a method unknown to this Church since ever I had the honour of being a member of it, a method that may be injurious to the reputation of several brethren ; for these reasons and to exonerate my own conscience, I beg leave to dissent from the said vote, and I do desire that this

In pursuance of this resolution, a large number of ministers, in the beginning of the following week, signed the confession, including almost all the brethren who were then in attendance, and from this time the two parties were respectively designated as SUBSCRIBERS and NON-SUBSCRIBERS.<sup>34</sup> Throughout these debates, the latter party had contrived to render themselves more and more obnoxious to the pious and faithful portion of the laity, especially under their own ministry. These plain but shrewd men were unable to appreciate their fine-spun definitions of what constituted Christian liberty on the one hand, and anti-Christian tyranny on the other; nor could they see any weight in their reasons for having so completely changed their minds on the propriety of signing a confession. To shield these brethren from the suspicions to which they had inevitably exposed themselves, Mr. Boyse proposed, and the synod rather hastily adopted, a resolution, in which they declared that they did not "insinuate the least reflection on these brethren as if they were unsound in the faith;" and they earnestly recommended the people "that they

my declaration of assent to the Westminster Confession of Faith as the confession of my faith, may be entered into the records of this synod as also my dissent, and that I may have an extract of them under the clerk's hand." The other minister who joined him in this dissent, "for the same reasons," was the Rev. William Smith of Ballee, in the county of Down.

<sup>34</sup> All these non-subscribers were members of the Belfast Society, but a few of them afterwards subscribed. Those who persisted in their non-subscribing principles, and were ultimately excluded from the communion of the synod, were Mr. Kirkpatrick and Mr. Haliday of Belfast, Mr. Abernethy of Antrim, Samuel Harper of Moira, Michael Bruce of Holywood, Thomas Wilson of Ballyclare, Josias Clugston of Larne, Thomas Shaw of Ahoghill, John Mairs of Newtownards, Thomas Nevin of Downpatrick, William Taylor, junior, of Cairncastle, and John Henderson of Duncan—twelve ministers in all. Among those members of the society who afterwards subscribed were the Rev. Alexander Brown of Donegore, the Rev. Patrick Bruce of Drumbo, brother of Mr. Bruce of Holywood, Archibald Maelaine, junior, of Banbridge, and his brother, Thomas Maelaine of Monaghan, father of the well-known translator of "Mosheim's Institutes." There were other ministers suspected of holding non-subscribing principles who subscribed, but whether they were members of the Belfast Society I cannot discover. Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 149.

entertain no jealousies concerning any of their ministers merely on account of their not subscribing at this time, but that they would look upon this as a matter wherein Christians and ministers are to exercise mutual forbearance." The latter part of this "charitable declaration," as it was called, though creditable to the tenderness and good feeling of the synod, can scarcely be regarded as candid or ingenuous. It assured the people that their ministers' refusal to subscribe at that particular juncture constituted no sufficient grounds for suspicions or apprehensions, though, from the previous debates, the synod knew well that these ministers were equally determined not to subscribe at any future time, and to do all in their power to prevent others from yielding to such an inquisitorial tyranny. In the exuberance of their forbearance, the synod at the same time put upon their minutes another charitable declaration, not, however, emanating from themselves, but from the refractory non-subscribers towards themselves! <sup>35</sup> In this declaration these ministers expressed their belief, with superfluous charity one would think, that the synod, in giving them an opportunity of renewing their subscription of its confession, had acted towards them "according to the light of their conscience." They assured the synod, as a proof of their singular forbearance, that they would still condescend "to maintain brotherly correspondence and communion" with this body, whom they had just indignantly denounced as persecuting, anti-scriptural, and inquisitorial. They professed their readiness "to preserve the honour, just authority, and order" of presbyteries and synods, which they must have known to be impracticable, so long as they were resolved to disobey these courts in vital points of discipline, and concluded with promising "to promote love and peace among all the people," though they were fully aware that their continued refusal to allay the popular misapprehensions was certain to perpetuate and augment discord and division. Such an inconsistent declaration was far from being creditable to the non-subscribers, while the acceptance of it by

<sup>35</sup> These two declarations, though not very correctly copied from the minutes of synod, may be seen in the "Narrative of Seven Synods," p. 53.

the synod still farther detracted from their character and influence as sincere upholders of the faith and discipline of the Church. It was by such vacillating measures as those now detailed—one day contending for subscription as of vital importance to the interests of the Church, and the next apologising for those who repudiated it, and exhorting their people to treat this opposition as of little or no moment—which not only plunged the synod in fiercer debates, but prevented the salutary measures which they did adopt, for maintaining subscription and the constitution of the Church, from having their due effect in removing the jealousies and misapprehensions of the laity.

Another matter of importance which engaged the attention of this meeting was the irregular installation of Mr. Haliday, in which the synod manifested similar inconsistency. Though, in answer to their call, he again refused, on the plea of conscience and religious liberty, to declare his adherence to his former subscription of the confession, yet, through the influence of the ministers from Dublin, they agreed to overlook this opposition, and to drop the further consideration of the case. Contrary to expectation, the synod thus tamely submitted to have their Pacific Act violated, and one of the most valuable bulwarks of their discipline deliberately overthrown, without taking a single step to mark their disapprobation either of the offender or of the presbytery. No wonder that many members of Mr. Haliday's congregation were dissatisfied with this "lame and impotent conclusion" of an affair which had excited so much discussion during the last ten months. They felt unwilling to continue under the ministry of one who had so publicly disavowed the law and authority of the synod. To remove these scruples, Mr. Haliday was called on to declare himself on the point of subjection to synodical authority, and though he gave a very ambiguous answer, declaring his willingness to be subject to synods and presbyteries merely "in all those things where the laws of the Gospel and the laws of society are not broke in upon," the synod willingly accepted of it, and received him as a member, with no other proviso than "that this be no precedent in any instance for the future." But this evasive assurance, in connection with Mr. Haliday's well-known principles,



was far from being equally satisfactory to his earnest and unsophisticated hearers. They immediately supplicated the synod to be disjoined from his ministry, and erected into a separate congregation. With some difficulty the meeting was brought to concur so far in this supplication as to recommend the petitioners to confer privately with Mr. Haliday, and, if still unsatisfied, to lay their case before the presbytery of Belfast; and should any party not concur in their decision, the synod's fixed committee were empowered to meet at Dungannon, when summoned by the moderator, and issue this affair. The result was, that notwithstanding the opposition of Messrs. Kirkpatrick and Haliday, a third congregation was erected in Belfast by the presbytery in the end of August, and confirmed by the committee at Dungannon in the month of October following.<sup>36</sup>

The only other proceedings of this synod, connected with this affair of Mr. Haliday, consisted in passing three overtures or resolutions for rendering the Pacific Act, which had been so notoriously violated in his case, "more effectual, and for securing the peace of the Church." By these acts, it was provided—first, that no person should be licensed, ordained, or installed without

<sup>36</sup> Some of the difficulties thrown in the way of this new congregation may be seen from the following extract of a letter from Mr. Lang of Loughbrickland, written to Wodrow in November of this year:—"The new erection in Belfast goes on, the foundation of the new meeting-house being already laid. The presbytery of Belfast had limited them to a day and a half to take subscriptions for it, on which they appealed to the synod's committee, which met the 17th of last month to decide that affair, and did it in favour of the appellants to whom they allowed until the 1st of January to take subscriptions; yet limiting them to £35 from the old [Mr. Haliday's] and £20 from the new congregation [Mr. Kirkpatrick's] of the present payments of the subscribers. [All this referred to the making up of the annual stipend list for this third congregation.] The committee also appointed them supplies to the next General Synod. The ministers of Belfast appealed from the committee's sentence, taking advantage of the want of the word 'finally' in the synod's minute commissioning the committee to decide that affair. Yet the synod, I believe, will approve what the committee did." Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 151. See another instance of petty opposition to them in the building of their church, on the part of Mr. Kirkpatrick, in Wodrow's "Analecta," vol. iii. p. 468.

the concurrence of two-thirds of the presbytery then present ; secondly, that should any single member protest against such license, ordination, or installation, further proceedings therein should be arrested until the next synod ; and, thirdly, that should the Pacific Act be again violated, the presiding minister should be suspended at the discretion of the synod.<sup>37</sup>

This meeting of synod had not separated long when the controversy between the parties was transferred to the press, by the publication of a frivolous paper by a Scottish minister, on the synodical declaration of belief in the Deity of the Saviour. This querulous critic, the Rev. Wm. Dugud, M.A., styling himself "Minister of Jesus in Scotland,"<sup>38</sup> in a few lines, printed on a single folio page, technically called "a broadside," objected to certain phrases, in which that doctrine was stated, as ambiguous and delusive, and declared, that if he "were the greatest Arian that ever lived, he could safely subscribe the Belfast declaration." This puerile attack by such a man should have been permitted to pass unheeded, or, if noticed at all, the vindication of the synodical paper should alone have been attempted. But, unfortunately, the reply was hastily undertaken, and as hastily

<sup>37</sup> Thompson's "Abstract," &c., p. 28.

<sup>38</sup> This person had been brought up a Romanist, but joined the Established Church of Scotland, and was licensed by the presbytery of Kirkaldy in July 1710. The parish of Burntisland falling vacant soon after, the Jacobites, who ruled that borough, got up a call for him from the magistrates, while another minister was called by the well-affected people. The case of these competing calls came before the General Assembly of 1712, who remitted it to the commission ; but, by a singular coincidence, before this court could take up the matter, the act of parliament restoring patronages had passed, and Dugud's Jacobite friends in Burntisland immediately procured for him a presentation from Queen Anne to that parish ; and on this presentation, which is remarkable for having been the very first that was issued under that unhappy act, he prosecuted his settlement there with much violence, and even insolence, before the Church courts, and finally appealed to parliament. But the Assembly of 1713 withdrew his license, and prohibited him from preaching in Scotland. He went to England, and published a pamphlet on his case in London in 1714, which I have seen, and in which he styles himself the Rev. Wm. Dugud. He had probably come over to Ireland at the time he wrote the paper mentioned above. Wodrow details his case, calling him Doucat, in his "Analecta," vol. ii. pp. 198-200.

executed, by a very indiscreet man, the Rev. Mr. Dunlop of Athlone, who had already been rebuked by the synod for rashly asserting what he could not substantiate.<sup>39</sup> He published anonymously a brief tract, entitled, "An Account of the Mind of the Synod at Belfast, 1721 ; in a Short Reply to Mr. Dugud's Remarks upon their Declaration."<sup>40</sup> So far as he defended the phraseology of that paper, his tract was useful and unobjectionable, though he writes in a very loose style, and his meaning is occasionally obscure. What he urged against the non-subscribers, respecting their change of opinion as to the Confession of Faith, and subjection to synodical authority, was just and forcible, though harshly and offensively expressed. But not content with these remarks, he reverted to his former hasty and unjust charge against one of them, and applying it absolutely to the whole of the non-subscribers, he unceremoniously speaks of them as Arians, and as covering their unsoundness by refusing to subscribe the Confession of Faith.

This anonymous, and, in one respect, unjustifiable attack, could not fail to call forth the non-subscribers in their own defence. The first that took up the pen was Mr. Kirkpatrick of Belfast, who entrusted his manuscript to Dr. Victor Ferguson, one of his elders, and a member of the Belfast Society, to be published anonymously under his auspices. It is entitled, "A Vindication of the Presbyterian Ministers in the North of Ireland, subscribers and non-subscribers, from many gross and groundless aspersions cast upon them in a late scandalous libel, entitled, 'An Account of the Mind of the Synod,' &c. By a sincere lover of truth and peace. Published and recommended by Victor Ferguson, M.D."<sup>41</sup> It appeared towards the end of the year,

<sup>39</sup> See note 14 of this chapter, and the text,

<sup>40</sup> This tract was published without a title-page, but was probably printed at Belfast. It is in 18mo, pp. 15. Wodrow, on the authority of a letter from Mr. Boyse of Dublin, ascribed it to Mr. M'Cracken. ("Wodrow Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 635.) But Mr. M'Cracken says, in a subsequent letter, that the tract referred to was suppressed by himself, as I have already related.

<sup>41</sup> Belfast, 1721, 8vo, pp. 82. The violent epithets applied in this title to Mr. Dunlop's tract stand in singular contrast with the designation of the

and occasioned much uneasiness in the minds of the subscribers, by the partial view which it gave of the two parties. On behalf of the subscribers little was said, and that little was incorrect, while the principal portion of the work was devoted to a most anxious and elaborate vindication of the principles and proceedings of the non-subscribers. Among the arguments which its author employs for this purpose, he insists at some length on the oft-pleaded doctrine of the headship of Christ, and relies upon it as the great bulwark of their views of religious liberty, and the strongest barrier against subscription to a confession. The subsequent opponents of subscription occupied the same ground. This "Vindication" formed by far the most plausible and complete argument in their favour which had yet been published. The next person who appeared in the field was no other than Mr. Abernethy himself. Following the example of Mr. Kirkpatrick, the manuscript of his work, which had been written immediately after the synod, was committed to the Dublin ministers, now identified with the non-subscribers, to be printed under their eye in Dublin, without his name, and to be ushered into the world under their patronage. It appeared in the beginning of the year 1722, under this title—"Seasonable Advice to the Protestant Dissenters in the North of Ireland; being a defence of the late General Synod's charitable declarations. With a commendatory preface by the Rev. Nath. Weld, J. Boyse, and R. Choppin."<sup>42</sup> No notice was, of course, taken in this pamphlet of the previous controversy since the meeting of synod. The principal object of the author was to explain and defend the refusal of the non-subscribers to join in the declaration of belief in the Deity of Christ, and in the voluntary subscription of the

writer as "a lover of peace." Mr. Abernethy, in his pamphlet, is even more severe. Speaking of the anonymous author, he permits himself to say, "If that infamous scribbler should renew his impotent efforts, I doubt not but wise and good men of both parties will heartily concur in the most proper measures to disappoint the malicious designs of such an incendiary." "Seasonable Advice," p. 5, note.

<sup>42</sup> Dublin, 1722, 8vo, pp. xxii. and 57. It is reprinted in "Searce and Valuable Tracts, &c., by the late Rev. J. Abernethy, now first collected together." London, 1751.



Confession of Faith. This is by far the ablest production of Mr. Abernethy's skilful and practised pen. All his resources of argument and eloquence are directed, not only to exhibit the non-subscribing scheme in the most attractive light, but to prove that the question at issue between his party and the synod was one of very inferior moment, wholly unworthy of exciting any apprehension or alarm on the part of the laity. "There is, I hope," he writes, "no occasion to apprehend that ever-important points of Christianity will be opposed in presbyteries and synods; if they be, then let the people take the alarm. But while ministers do in their meetings only debate about matters of expediency, why should the laity be so extremely concerned?"<sup>43</sup>

This clever exposition of anti-subscription principles elicited no answer for several months. In the meantime, Dr. Ferguson's "Vindication," the name by which it was popularly known, called forth several papers in reply. First appeared, early in this year, a small anonymous tract, entitled, "New Lights set in a clear Light,"<sup>44</sup> which exposed some of the fallacies of the "Vindication," when recommending the principles of the Belfast Society, and the dangerous and novel views contained in Abernethy's sermon on personal persuasion. Soon after, there was published another tract of the same size, and similar title, though from a different pen, entitled, "More Light, being some remarks upon the late Vindication, &c. Printed at Belfast. By a true lover of Presbyterian principles."<sup>45</sup> Both of these productions were very inadequate defences against the vigorous and dexterous assaults of the "Vindication." They were soon followed, however, by an excellent pamphlet, also anonymous, which appeared about the month of May, entitled, "Some General Remarks, argumentative and historical, on the Vindication published by Dr. Ferguson, with the consistency of subscribing the Westminster Confession

<sup>43</sup> "Seasonable Advice," p. 51.

<sup>44</sup> [Belfast], 1721-22, 32mo, pp. 22. It was probably written by Mr. Kennedy of Tullylish, who sent a copy of it to Wodrow on the 2d of February.

<sup>45</sup> [Belfast], 1721-22, 32mo, pp. 23. This tract may have been the production of Mr. Malcome of Dunmurry.

of Faith with the Abjuration Oath. With a preface to the Doctor."<sup>46</sup> This is an ably written tract, and the first on the side of the synod which, in point of close reasoning and an attractive style, may be fairly put in comparison with the productions of the Belfast Society. The argument for the subscribers is stated with perspicuity, the plausible sophistries on the other side are satisfactorily exposed, while a spirit of candour and moderation runs throughout the whole. The non-subscribers declined noticing these replies from the friends of the synod. They contented themselves with reprinting a conciliatory letter, written by George the First to the Protestant cantons of Switzerland, when involved in painful contentions, by two of these petty states oppressively enforcing subscription to the *Formula Consensus*.<sup>47</sup> The object of the king, and of the states of Holland who joined in this attempt at mediation, was to induce the magistrates of Zurich and of Berne to lay aside this compulsory subscription of a confession already abrogated by the other cantons, which had become the cause of political feuds, to the weakening of the Protestant interest in that part of Europe. Although this case bore little analogy either to the synod's permission of a voluntary subscription by her own members, or to a Church (not a state) requiring subscription to her confession from all who enter her ministry, yet the non-subscribers eagerly seized on the royal letter, and republished it, with certain *QUERIES* attached, in which they adroitly endeavoured to apply its reasonings and exhortations to the question at issue between them and the synod.

Hitherto the controversy had been conducted anonymously, but a champion now boldly entered the conflict with his vizor up. This was the Rev. Matthew Clerk, minister of Boveedy, or Kilrea,<sup>48</sup> who published, sometime in the month of June, with

<sup>46</sup> [Belfast], 1722, 8vo, pp. 44. It was written by the Rev. Samuel Hemp-hill, minister of Castleblayncy, who claimed it as his in a subsequent pamphlet. See his "Letter to Mr. Haliday," &c., pp. 32-34.

<sup>47</sup> It was printed in two pages folio, with this title, "The Royal Peacemaker, or King George's Letter to the Protestant Cantons of Switzerland for the unity of Protestants, from the 'St. James's Evening Post,' of May 17, 1722. With some queries upon it."

<sup>48</sup> Mr. Clerk was ordained in Boveedy in the year 1697; he resigned this

his name attached, "A Letter from the Country to a Friend in Belfast, with respect to the Belfast Society," &c.<sup>49</sup> Mr. Clerk was an acute and spirited, though not a graceful or experienced disputant. He aimed some vigorous and well-directed attacks at the strongest points of the society's scheme, and employed against them the *argumentum ad hominem* with considerable dexterity and success, though not in all cases in a becoming spirit. With this publication the controversy was suspended for a season, but the agitation throughout the province continued undiminished, though it had thus found, to a certain extent, a vent through the press. The people were now engaged on both sides of the conflict. Those who took part with the non-subscribing ministers became more and more opposed to the authority of the synod, and more zealous in propagating, by argument, ridicule, and in some cases even by undue influence,<sup>50</sup> the peculiar principles of that party. What their ministers would not venture on, these new allies boldly, and, no doubt, indiscreetly, hastened to do. They characterised the asking of a minister to profess his faith in the essential doctrines of the Gospel as a tyranny equalled only by the Romish inquisition. They denounced the Westminster Confession as full of inconsistencies, and as containing propositions contrary to the Scriptures. They vented, at the same time, many latitudinarian notions, which being encouraged rather than disavowed by their ministers, disgusted and irritated all those who adhered to the synod. The deep-rooted convictions and long-cherished prepossessions of the latter were needlessly shocked by such offensive avowals; and thus this infinitely larger body of the laity were gradually driven into an attitude of more determined opposition to the conciliatory policy hitherto adopted by the synod.

Some of the leading ministers, who had steadily supported that line of policy, felt much embarrassed, not only by this growing alienation of the well-affected laity, but also by the spread of

charge, and emigrated to America in the early part of the year 1729. The reader will meet with another tract by him.

<sup>49</sup> [Belfast], 1722 (by mistake printed 1712), 18mo, pp. 24.

<sup>50</sup> Masterton's "Apology," &c., p. 41.

non-subscribing and anti-Presbyterian principles, notwithstanding all their measures for preserving the purity and peace of the Church. From this period the subscribing ministers began to differ as to the future policy of the synod. Some were of opinion that concession to the scruples of a few brethren, who were now in principle Independents rather than Presbyterians, had been pushed far enough, and that, however painful the alternative, the time had arrived for withdrawing from further communion with them in presbyteries and synods. This party was as yet few, scattered, and unorganised, and it was, consequently, some time before their influence was felt in the counsels of the synod. But its formation is discernible in the efforts now made by several ministers to obtain the advice of the Scottish Church how they could best meet the difficulties of their position. In the month of October of the previous year, Mr. Kennedy of Tullylish visited Scotland, and conferred with his friends there on this subject.<sup>51</sup> In the spring of this year, letters were written to other leading ministers of that Church, urging them to obtain the opinion of the General Assembly on the question of subscription, either generally, or as applicable to their sister Church in Ireland.<sup>52</sup> Having received some encouragement, the Rev. Mr. M'Bride of Ballymoney proceeded to Edinburgh with this view in the end of May, when the assembly was sitting. Before his arrival, an overture had been framed to meet his wishes by the friends of the Irish synod, but it was arrested in committee on the morning of the day on which the assembly rose, principally for want of time, and did not therefore come before the assembly.<sup>53</sup> A private conference, however, was held with Mr. M'Bride by a few of the principal ministers, before whom he laid a full statement of their difficulties, doing ample justice to the presumed orthodoxy of the non-subscribers. A minute was

<sup>51</sup> In Wodrow's "Analecta," vol. ii. pp. 351-53, the reader will see some curious information relative to the state of matters in the Irish Church, which the indefatigable historian had obtained from Mr. Kennedy on this occasion.

<sup>52</sup> "The Wodrow Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 631, &c.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, vol. ii. p. 652 and 655, 656.



afterwards drawn up, embodying the views of these ministers in relation to the Irish Church, which was transmitted to Mr. M'Bride, to be shown to his friends at the approaching synod. Their opinion was in favour of maintaining subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith; but, at the same time, they tendered an advice with respect to the non-subscribers, which, had it been followed, would only have added to their embarrassments. This advice was contained in the following paragraph:—“It is evidently essential to a Presbyterian establishment,” by which it is obvious they mean not a Church legally established, but simply one formed on Presbyterian principles, “that the several members of Church judicatories should submit to the judgment of the majority of their number; and therefore the above-mentioned ministers [the non-subscribers] cannot without departing from their known principles but think that this rule ought to be observed, especially in a society which has so visibly increased upon a Presbyterian footing; and if this cannot be maintained without some inconvenience to a few particular members, it seems to them just, upon the common principles of society, that the credit and convenience of these few ought to give way to the general interests and good order of the whole society; so that if they shall continue positive in refusing to submit to what seems so necessary for the common good, they ought to claim no voice in the judicatories, but content themselves to manage the affairs of their own congregations apart, leaving the Church judicatories in their several bounds to act as hitherto they have done upon Presbyterian principles. But in such a case it is judged the duty of their brethren to preserve the usefulness of such refusers among their own flocks by keeping up both Christian and ministerial communion with them so long as they teach nothing contrary to the received Protestant doctrine.”<sup>54</sup> Before this paper reached Ireland, the non-subscribers, who had evidently many friends in Scotland, and who must have had correspondents connected with the Church there, raised the cry that the subscribing ministers were representing them in Scotland

<sup>54</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 158.

as Arians, and were attempting to bring the synod into subjection to the Scottish Church. So loud was this clamour, that both Mr. M'Bride and Mr. Kennedy were obliged to procure certificates from the Scottish ministers with whom they had conversed, exculpating them from both of these charges, of having misrepresented the non-subscribers, and of seeking to bring their Church under a foreign jurisdiction.

As the annual meeting of synod approached, great anxiety was felt lest a breach of communion between the two parties should be found unavoidable. Under this feeling, a well-written paper was extensively circulated, entitled, "A Call to Prayer, in an Address to the Protestant Dissenters in the North of Ireland,"<sup>55</sup> which emanated, as it states, from "a few praying Christians, whose hearts tremble within them for the ark of God, and who wish for nothing more than to see Jerusalem a quiet and peaceable habitation." It besought all parties to mourn over the sad defections and dissensions of their Church, to set apart a day of humiliation and prayer prior to the ensuing synod, and to devote one hour every Monday morning "to fervent prayer to the God of peace and love to heal and remedy our scandalous backslidings and divisions." What this paper especially deprecated was the dreaded separation of the synod; and as we have now become so familiar with such a result, as to wonder at the alarm which it then excited, the following extract is necessary to show how formidable it appeared in those days:—"And forasmuch as division is the thing which most immediately threatens us, and a fatal rupture is feared by many, by which the common interests of Protestant dissenters will be exposed to contempt and scorn, and religion itself suffer in the most sensible manner, and all that's dear and valuable to us put to the greatest hazard, we would in a particular manner recommend it to you to be earnest with God in this matter, that he would prevent the fears of his poor people, and disappoint the expectations of all those who watch for our halting." If this earnest "Call to Prayer" was obeyed in the same spirit in which it was urged, the reader will see it did not pass unrewarded.

<sup>55</sup> In two folio pages, but without place or date of printing.

At the last synod at Belfast it was found necessary to change the place of meeting, on account of the insolent treatment which the friends of subscription had met with from the partisans of the Belfast Society. It was accordingly resolved to hold the next synod at Derry; and once removed, it was nearly half a century before it returned to Belfast. Owing to the remoteness of the place of meeting, the synod of this year was not so numerously attended as the preceding one. No fewer than four ministers were present, as corresponding members, from the southern presbytery of Dublin;<sup>56</sup> and the first symptom of the existence of an extreme party in the synod, opposed to further concession, was manifested when these brethren presented their commission. It was proposed that they should not be received as correspondents, on account of their protest at the previous synod against the voluntary subscription of the Confession of Faith. But having satisfactorily explained their conduct on that occasion, they were admitted to sit and vote as members of the court.<sup>57</sup> The same high party, as they were called, were now no longer averse to a rupture with the non-subscribers. In conformity with the advice received from Scotland, they came forward with an overture to exclude from the synod all ministers who would not subscribe either the Westminster Confession at large, or at least the answers to the fifth and sixth questions in the Shorter Catechism. This startling proposal alarmed the more moderate of their subscribing brethren. They drew up a short paper, which was signed by twenty-three ministers, deprecating the proposed breach of communion, and imploring the meeting to drop all further debates on subscription—a step which the Dublin correspondents had previously recommended to both parties with great earnestness. When these counter-proposals were discussed in the synod, the non-subscribers appear to have acted in a becoming spirit. A subscribing minister of the extreme party thus related their conduct on this occasion:—"The non-subscribers made the usual defence of their peculiar notions

<sup>56</sup> These were Messrs. Boyse, Weld, Stewart, and Choppin, all ministers in Dublin.

<sup>57</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 164.

with respect to public confessions ; only some of them, and these the most distinguished, publicly declared that—if they had foreseen what consequences would have ensued upon their publishing their peculiar sentiments, they would have been very loath to have done it ; and they signified their resolution not to disturb the peace of this Church for the future by any unnecessary publishing or propagating of these their sentiments. They likewise declared their faith in the article of our Saviour's supreme Deity, and owned the essentiality of said doctrine."<sup>58</sup> These counter-proposals having been referred to a committee, a series of FIVE resolutions was drawn up by them, and adopted by the synod, "in order," as the preamble states, "to removing all grounds of division and preserving peace." By the first, it was resolved, that "the declaring articles of faith in Scripture words only shall not be accepted as a sufficient evidence of a person's soundness in the faith." By the second, the synod resolved "most constantly and firmly to adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith;" and, by the third, "to maintain the Presbyterian government and discipline as hitherto exercised." So far these were seasonable and salutary resolutions, the cordial and consistent adoption of which might have realised the objects set forth in the preamble. But as the non-subscribers refused to acquiesce in them, they could afford no guarantee for the continuance of peace ; while, on the other hand, their influence on the minds of the jealous and anxious laity was in some degree neutralised by the two remaining resolutions, which once more betrayed the vacillating policy of the synod, deluded by the hope of being able to maintain unity and concord in the midst of avowed differences of opinion on vital points. By the former of these concluding resolutions, the fourth in number, the synod once more expressed their "desire to exercise Christian forbearance towards the non-subscribers, so long as they governed themselves according to the acts of the synod, and did not disturb the peace of the Church." And, by the last, the synod "earnestly and most seriously exhorted the people under the ministry of the non-subscribers to condescend, as far

<sup>58</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 168.



as their consciences allowed them, in adhering to their pastors.” From the fourth resolution two ministers dissented, who were afterwards joined by a third ; and they drew up a long and able protest, setting forth the incompatibility of these two concluding resolutions with the preceding ones, and the inconsistency of maintaining communion with those who would neither submit to the just authority of the Church, nor own her confession of faith, and who refused even to join in the first three resolutions.<sup>59</sup>

Notwithstanding this protest, the leading men of all parties were full of hopes that the amicable result of this synod would be the harbinger of returning peace and concord to the Church.<sup>60</sup> A few ministers, however, were not so sanguine. The three protestors concluded their paper with saying—“ We cannot see how these good things shall be attained while the Church continues in a state of disorder and confusion. And if these non-subscribing brethren retain their principles and vent their notions as they have done, we despair of seeing much peace or charity among us.” And another minister, in a different part of the province, writing to a friend in Scotland within a month after this synod, expressed his fears that their wounds were only partially healed, and that their differences would reappear in a little time with increased violence.<sup>61</sup> These prognostications were too soon and too fully realised. The spark which rekindled these controversial flames proceeded from the collision of parties in Belfast respecting the newly-erected congregation in that town.

<sup>59</sup> The minister who drew up this well-written protest, which is recorded in the minutes of synod, was the Rev. John Stirling, minister of Ballykelly, and the two other protestors were the Rev. Matthew Clerk of Kilrea, and the Rev. Henry Neill of Ballyrashane.

<sup>60</sup> Mr. Boyse of Dublin preached an excellent sermon, on the Lord’s-day during the sitting of this synod, on our Saviour’s new commandment of love, which he declined to publish, though requested to do so, because, as he afterwards said in his preface, “ I hoped the resolutions of the synod would lay a foundation for the revival of love and peace.” But being disappointed in this hope, he published it early in the following year, under this title—“ A Sermon preached at Londonderry, June 24, 1722, on John xiii. 34, 35.” Dub. 8vo, 1723, pp. 32. It is reprinted in his collected works.

<sup>61</sup> Wodrow’s MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 167.

The synod at Derry had confirmed this erection, and dismissed the ungracious appeal of Mr. Kirkpatrick and Mr. Haliday. Every effort was, therefore, now made by the people who had been compelled to abandon their ministry to build a house of worship and call a minister before the winter. Mr. Samuel Smith, an eminent merchant in Belfast, proceeded to Scotland in the month of September to obtain pecuniary assistance towards the erection of their church. On Saturday, the 22d of that month, he laid their case before the magistrates and town council of Glasgow, resting their claims chiefly on the necessity for a third place of Presbyterian worship in so populous a place. The magistrates readily granted their sanction for a collection for this object, to be made during the following week by persons appointed by themselves. And they recommended the case to the charity of their fellow-citizens, on the ground, among other reasons, that the members of this new congregation were not only originally of the Church and nation of Scotland, but were firm adherents to the doctrine and government of the Scottish Church, as set forth in their common confession of faith. Intimation of this collection was accordingly made in all the churches on the following day; but, on Monday morning, one James Arbuckle, a graduate of the university, and at this time a student of divinity under Professor Simpson, and a warm supporter of non-subscribing principles, issued a printed advertisement, in order, as he alleged, to vindicate Messrs. Kirkpatrick and Haliday from certain "artful insinuations" against them, which he presumed were to be found in Mr. Smith's petition to the council, though it did not contain the most remote reference to these ministers. In reply, Mr. Smith felt called on to print copies of his petition, and of the minute of council authorising the collection, with some pointed animadversions on Arbuckle's ungracious remarks; the latter published a rejoinder, with which this unusual controversy terminated.<sup>62</sup> By the exertions of Mr. Smith, the synod of Glasgow and Ayr, at their meeting at Irvine,

<sup>62</sup> These three printed papers, published in Glasgow between Monday the 24th, and Saturday the 29th of September, are preserved among the Wodrow collections in the Advocates' library.

on the 3d of October, also cheerfully ordered a collection to be made throughout their bounds on behalf of this new congregation, whose claims were everywhere liberally responded to. They were enabled to commence their house of worship under favourable auspices, and to complete the roofing and glazing of it before winter. In return for the generous assistance rendered by their Scottish friends, they set apart, in perpetuity, three large seats in one of the galleries for the use of strangers from Scotland visiting Belfast—one for merchants and masters of vessels, and the others for seamen frequenting the port.<sup>63</sup> In the meantime, they had also used every effort to obtain a suitable pastor, and, in the month of October, presented a call to the Rev. Charles Masterton, minister of Connor, near Ballymena.<sup>64</sup> This was a most judicious choice. The removal of this eminent minister to so prominent a place gladdened the hearts of the friends of the synod, but it was not very palatable to the non-subscribers. Their friends in the presbytery of Antrim, under whose jurisdiction Connor was, successfully opposed his removal from that congregation. But the case was carried before the synod's committee, specially summoned at Dungannon for the purpose, in the beginning of December, when the sentence of the presbytery of Antrim was unanimously reversed, and Mr. Masterton's installation in Belfast was appointed to take place on the third Wednesday of February 1723.

When the sub-synod of Belfast met in the beginning of January, Mr. Smith applied to them for a recommendation of the claims of the new congregation to Christian friends in the East of Scotland, who knew less of Irish affairs than those in the western counties; but, to the great surprise of the friends of that congregation, Mr. Haliday and the non-subscribing party warmly opposed this application. In the debate which sprang up on this point, Mr. Haliday referred to a letter from Pro-

<sup>63</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 177.

<sup>64</sup> Mr. Masterton was a native of Scotland. He entered the University of Edinburgh in 1698, where he graduated, and was licensed by the presbytery of Linlithgow. He came over to Ireland in 1703, and was ordained in Connor in May 1704.

fessor Simpson of Glasgow College, the steady friend and correspondent of that party, in which the professor alleged that Mr. Smith of Belfast, when in Glasgow in the previous autumn, had said, that though he did not suspect the non-subscribers of Arianism, he feared they maintained principles which might be dangerous to the Church. Mr. Smith demanded that this letter should be produced, but Mr. Haliday declined to do so; and, notwithstanding his high claims to candour and charity, he thus preferred a serious charge against an elder, which, when challenged, he refused to substantiate. Indignant at this unfair treatment, another elder, Colonel Upton of Templepatrick, one of the members of parliament for the county of Antrim, rose and declared, that even supposing Mr. Smith had used the words attributed to him, he had only spoken what was true, for that party did maintain principles which opened a door for error and heresy to enter the Church. On being asked by the non-subscribers what principles these were? he specified their favourite dogma of non-subscription to any human declaration of faith; and being further challenged to produce proof of this assertion, he referred to "The Vindication," edited by Dr. Ferguson, and "The Good Old Way," published by the Belfast Society. A long and very keen debate, which it was quite irregular to permit under the circumstances, followed, which occupied the whole of Saturday, the last day of the meeting. Most of the subscribing ministers having by that time returned home, the non-subscribers easily carried a resolution in the synod, to the effect that Colonel Upton had failed to make good his charge against them; upon which this steady friend to the discipline and order of the Church carried the case by appeal to the next General Synod.<sup>65</sup>

This conduct of the non-subscribers opened up a new source of agitation, and contributed more than any other single event to accelerate the schism which afterwards occurred. Though Mr. Smith failed in obtaining a recommendatory letter from the synod to Scotland, he was not discouraged. Immediately after

<sup>65</sup> Wodrow's "Analecta," vol. ii. p. 375, and Kennedy's "Defence of the Synod," in answer to Haliday's "Reasons against Subscription," p. 9 of "The Preface Considered."



this meeting, he proceeded once more to Scotland, accompanied by the Rev. William Livingston of Templepatrick, where they spent nearly three months, making collections in Edinburgh, St. Andrews, Perth, Dundee, and other places, and meeting with much encouragement.<sup>66</sup> Their jealous adversaries in Belfast, however, did all they could to mar the success of this fresh appeal to Scottish benevolence. They descended to the mean expedient of printing and circulating an anonymous pamphlet in Edinburgh, during the time the Irish deputation were in that city, representing the members of the new congregation as unworthy of public assistance, and resorting to the most paltry insinuations in order to prejudice the people of Scotland against their claims.<sup>67</sup> This pitiful attack was followed by a letter from Messrs. Kirkpatrick and Haliday, printed at Edinburgh at the same time, in which, in a more guarded manner, and under the pretext of vindicating themselves and their party, they endeavour to involve the new congregation, and all who aid it, in the guilt of schism.<sup>68</sup> These ungenerous attempts to deprive the adherents of subscription in Belfast of the sympathy and assistance of the Scottish people do not appear to have been attended with much success. The deputation returned to Ireland in the first week of April, well satisfied with the result of their mission.

Mr. Livingston had scarcely reached home, when his elder, Colonel Upton, sought his assistance in preparing for the trial of his appeal before the approaching synod. A meeting of the leading subscribing ministers was accordingly held at Castle Upton, adjoining the town of Templepatrick, to confer together, not only in reference to this appeal, but also on the state of the

<sup>66</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 180.

<sup>67</sup> It was entitled, "A Letter from a Gentleman of Ireland to a Minister of the Church of Scotland, concerning a Charitable Contribution which is desired for Building a new Meeting-House in Belfast." Edin. 1723, 4to, pp. 8.

<sup>68</sup> It was published with this title, "A Letter from the Rev. Messrs. Kirkpatrick and Haliday, Ministers in Belfast, to a Friend at Glasgow, with relation to the new Meeting-House in Belfast." Edin. 1723, 4to, pp. 13. The latter is dated October 8, 1722, but it did not appear in print till February of this year. See Wodrow's opinion of both these pamphlets, in the "Wodrow Correspondence," vol. iii., letter x., p. 16.

Church, and the course which should be adopted. Several of the principal persons were unable to attend, among whom were Mr. Hutcheson of Armagh, Mr. Gilbert Kennedy of Tullylish, Mr. Thomas Kennedy of Brigh, Mr. Boyd of Macosquin, and Mr. M'Bride of Ballymoney. Nothing final was settled, but certain queries, designed to elicit the opinion of their friends in Scotland, especially on the propriety of coming to an immediate breach of communion, were agreed upon, and sent thither by Mr. Livingston.<sup>69</sup> The replies which they received were too vague to be of much practical utility. On the question of a rupture at the approaching synod, Wodrow was of opinion that they were not yet ripe for this "last remedy;" that they might rest content if the Church could be effectually secured against the admission of non-subscribing ministers in time coming, "and some other things attained;" and that the breach, if unavoidable, ought to be thrown upon the non-subscribers rather than on the synod.<sup>70</sup>

In the meantime, materials for a new trial at the approaching synod were furnished by a pamphlet which appeared shortly before it met. After a silence of some months, the Belfast Society at length condescended to notice the pamphlet which the Rev. Mr. Clerk of Kilrea had published against them in June 1722. In the following October they sent him a letter, signed by six members of the society resident in the county of Antrim, out of Belfast, specifying certain passages in which they alleged he had unwarrantably reflected on their characters, and calling upon him to explain or retract these, before they proceeded to prefer any public complaint against him. Mr. Clerk took ample time to reply to this letter, as his answer did not make its appearance in print till about a month before the meeting of synod.<sup>71</sup> When it did appear, it was far from being calculated

<sup>69</sup> "The Wodrow Correspondence," vol. iii. pp. 56-58, where a copy of the *QUERIES*, three in number, may be seen in the note.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, vol. iii. p. 58, &c.

<sup>71</sup> It bore this title, "A Letter from the Belfast Society to the Rev. Mr. Matthew Clerk, &c., with an Answer to the Society's Remarks on a pamphlet lately published, entitled, 'A Letter from the Country to a Friend in Belfast,' " &c. [Belfast], 1723, 12mo, pp. 29.

to soothe the irritated feelings of the society. Instead of retracting anything he had said in his former pamphlet respecting their principles, though there was undoubtedly room, at least in one or two points, for apology or explanation, he confidently repeated his assertions, and added some pithy and spirited remarks in defence of subscription, though very oddly expressed. In the eyes of the Belfast Society, this pamphlet only aggravated the original offence, and they forthwith gave him notice, that at the synod, now close at hand, they would prefer a formal charge against him for calumny and misrepresentation.

In consequence of these competing charges, (of Colonel Upton against the non-subscribers, and of the non-subscribers, or Belfast Society, against Mr. Clerk), the eyes of all parties were turned to the synod, which met again at Dungannon in the middle of June. The Rev. Thomas Kennedy of Brigh, the former moderator, opened the meeting with an excellent sermon on brethren dwelling together in unity, which was afterwards published,<sup>72</sup> and the Rev. Mr. Masterton of Belfast was elected moderator—a high compliment to him, so recently after his removal to that arduous field of labour, and a significant indication of the spirit which pervaded this synod. It sat no less than eleven days, nine of which were occupied with the trial of Colonel Upton's appeal. In conducting this process, the colonel first endeavoured to establish the abstract truth of the principle for which he contended—namely, that to condemn all creeds or declarations of faith in human words, opens a door to let in errors and heresies into the Church. The debates on this proposition were protracted through seven days. On the eighth he proceeded to prove that the non-subscribers maintained the principle which he had shown to be so dangerous, by quoting the two pamphlets he had produced before the sub-synod of Belfast, to which no objection had then been made by the non-subscribers. But, to the surprise of the entire synod, they now refused to admit these works as theirs, though one was actually published in their name, till regularly proved by strictly legal evidence. This quibble, for it can be

<sup>72</sup> It was simply entitled, “A Sermon preached before the General Synod at Dungannon, June 18, 1723.” Belfast, 1723, 12mo, pp. 27.

viewed in no other light, at once arrested the further progress of the trial. For neither was Colonel Upton, thus taken by surprise, in a position to prove this fact, without sending to Belfast for the necessary witnesses, thereby causing a postponement of the trial, nor would the non-subscribers permit such proof to be then taken, even had it been forthcoming, as they insisted on ten clear days' notice of the names of witnesses to be produced, in order to prove their connection with pamphlets which they had notoriously adopted as their own from the moment they appeared, nearly three years before. In this dilemma, there was no other course left than to postpone the trial to the next annual meeting; but on the general principle on which this process was founded, though not yet brought home to the non-subscribers, the synod adopted, after renewed opposition, three resolutions. By the first of these, they affirmed the principle maintained by Colonel Upton, "that the condemning all creeds and confessions, and declarations of faith in human words, as tests of orthodoxy, opens a door to let in errors and heresies into this Church." By the second, they maintained, that though it was possible for candidates to declare their faith in words of their own, to the satisfaction of their ordainers, yet it was far too great a trust, and extremely dangerous to the Church, to commit to a few ordaining ministers the sole power of judging what must be satisfactory to the entire body. And, by the third, they condemned the "Vindication," edited by Dr. Ferguson, as being of a very dangerous and pernicious tendency, and declared that its authors, whoever they were, and its dispersers, were disturbers of the peace of the Church.<sup>73</sup> The charge against Mr. Clerk having been abandoned by the Belfast Society, the adoption of these resolutions closed the proceedings of the synod in relation to the existing controversy. It was now quite obvious that a breach of communion was inevitable, and that its occurrence was only a question of time. After this meeting, the non-subscribers became more and more violent and unscrupulous, both from the pulpit

<sup>73</sup> The first and second of these resolutions of synod are given in Thompson's "Abstract," &c., p. 30; the third may be seen in the "Narrative of Seven Synods," p. 108.



and the press, in the assertion of their principles, and in opposing and vilifying the synod, to the great vexation and disquiet of the Church at large.

At this synod, a piece of management on the part of the non-subscribers came to light, which must detract very much from their character as the boasted enemies of every species of persecution, and the friends of free and unfettered discussion. In the previous April, the Rev. Mr. Nevin of Downpatrick, a very zealous partisan of their cause, proceeded to London to confer with their English friends on the state and prospects of the non-subscribing party in Ulster.<sup>74</sup> While he was there, a new arrangement for the disposal of the additional Royal Bounty was concluded, in which it was suspected he had a hand, though he afterwards disavowed any knowledge of it. The reader has seen that, through the agency of the Rev. Messrs. Boyse, Choppin, and Haliday, the king, in the year 1718, had placed upon the English civil list a grant of eight hundred pounds a year to the Irish dissenting ministers, one-half of which was allocated to the synod of Ulster, and regularly paid to their agent, who distributed it in equal portions among the northern ministers.<sup>75</sup> At this synod, however, a letter was received from Mr. Boyse, stating that this English or additional Royal Bounty was no longer to be paid to the synod's agent, but that it had been made over in trust to the Rev. Dr. Calamy, and certain other dissenting ministers in London, known to be favourable to the non-subscribers, to be distributed by them among the Irish ministers, and that these new trustees "would take care that such amongst the synod as were like to carry matters too high in Church affairs might find themselves obliged to walk more soberly, or words to that purpose."<sup>76</sup> So soon as this letter was communicated to the ministers met in interloquitur, or committee for temporal matters, they indignantly condemned it as a base attempt to deter them from what they believed to be their duty; and they warmly remonstrated with Mr. Boyse against this unexpected alteration,

<sup>74</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 187.

<sup>75</sup> See above, chap. xxiv.

<sup>76</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 85.

and especially against the threatened interference with the independence of the synod. Mr. Boyse endeavoured to explain away what he had said regarding the intentions of the new trustees; and it is probable that the remonstrance of the Ulster ministers had put an end to the project, for it did not attract any farther notice, and the grant appears to have been distributed as formerly.<sup>77</sup>

So soon as the minutes of this meeting of synod had been distributed, Mr. Kirkpatrick and Mr. Haliday assembled their congregations on a week-day, and, at great length, inveighed against the synod for having treated their party throughout the late trial with gross injustice. They took occasion to reassert their principles, and their determination to maintain them, in despite of their repeated condemnation by the supreme court.<sup>78</sup> This bold

<sup>77</sup> It is a curious circumstance, for which I am unable to account, that the payment of this English grant appears to have been suspended almost immediately after this new arrangement, and that it was not received by the Irish ministers for several years, at least not until the end of this reign. (Wodrow's "*Analecta*," vol. iv. p. 232.) It was paid in 1729, for in that year the synod allowed their treasurer four pounds per annum for his trouble in receiving and distributing this additional Royal Bounty. It had been placed on its former footing by George II. in that year.

<sup>78</sup> Mr. Mairs of Newtownards followed this example, but he had now lost much of his influence in that town, by having proposed to join the Episcopal Church not many months previously. The following is an account of this proposal, so extraordinary as coming from one of the noisiest opponents of subscription:—"The presbytery of Down met at Newton on the 22d of November last, upon a complaint of that congregation against their minister, Mr. John Mairs; who then being convicted of what was alleged, thereafter owned before the said presbytery and the congregation, that he had indeed been offering to conform to the Church of England and that he had apprised the Bishop of Down and Connor of his design to do so; but was now sorry and heartily repented of his said resolution and desired forgiveness first of God and then of the presbytery and congregation; and said that by this temptation of Satan cast in his way, he was now more fixed in his former faith and Presbyterian principles, and hoped this step of his weakness should have in the issue a good effect upon him in making him a more able advocate for the Presbyterian cause." (Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 177.) This vacillating conduct, coupled with his violent advocacy of non-subscribing principles, and his having laid himself open to strong suspicions of entertaining Arian views, alienated so many families from his ministry, that

denunciation of the synod's proceedings raised an unusual ferment in Belfast and the adjoining parishes, which it would perhaps have been more advisable for the friends of the synod to have overlooked. But they indiscreetly prolonged the agitation, and increased its unfavourable influence on their cause, by bringing the affair before a special meeting of the synod's fixed committee, which was summoned by the moderator, Mr. Masterton, and was held at Dungannon in the middle of September. A keen and protracted discussion arose, which ended in directing the presbytery of Belfast to meet forthwith, to summon before them such persons as were likely to give information on matters of fact, and to proceed according to the discipline of the Church, reporting the result of their inquiries to the next General Synod.<sup>79</sup> This result was certainly a poor return for having invoked the aid of the fixed committee, for the non-subscribers were always able to command a majority in that presbytery; and it might have been foreseen that they could and would easily render this order of the committee subservient to their own purposes. They accordingly overruled the proposal of the subscribing ministers for the appointment of a committee of presbytery to take evidence, as directed by the synod's committee, and they carried a motion appointing a day on which Messrs. Kirkpatrick and Haliday were to repeat before the presbytery and their congregations all that they had formerly said, in order that the presbytery might determine whether the account they then gave of the proceedings of synod, and of their own speeches therein, had been correct

the presbytery of Down, at their meeting in May of this year, found it necessary to erect these persons into a separate congregation. *Ibid*, vol. xx., No. 187.

<sup>79</sup> This committee also appointed an early day in November as a day of fasting and prayer, "on account of the melancholy state of the Church," and drew up reasons for the appointment, which were sent to the several presbyteries, and the day was very generally observed. Mr. Abernethy, early in the following year, published the sermon which he preached to his congregation on this occasion, entitled, "A Sermon preached at Antrim, Nov. 13, 1723, at a Fast observed in the Presbyterian Congregations in Ulster by agreement of their Ministers on the account of Divisions." Belfast, 1724, 4to, pp. 24. The text is 1 Cor. iii. 3.

or not. On the day named, the first Wednesday of November, an immense concourse of people assembled. Mr. Kirkpatrick, in a speech of nine hours' length, repeated all he had formerly said in defence of non-subscribing principles, in opposition to the proceedings of the last synod. Mr. Haliday spoke very briefly. Members of their own congregations testified to the agreement of their present with their previous statements, and, in the end, the presbytery exculpated them from having misrepresented what had taken place at the synod.<sup>80</sup> Thus, contrary to their wishes, the hasty and ill-advised effort of the subscribers to protect the synod ended in furnishing their opponents with another and a more favourable opportunity of renewing their attacks before a larger audience, and with greater injury to the synod, than they had enjoyed three months previously.

Shortly after this untoward meeting, Mr. Masterton published his long-expected answer to Mr. Abernethy's "Seasonable Advice," which had appeared nearly two years previously. He entitled it—"An Apology for the Northern Presbyterians in Ireland."<sup>81</sup> It had been prepared for the press prior to the late meeting of synod, and the manuscript had been read by several leading ministers in Scotland in the early part of the summer. These ministers, though they approved of the work, did not advise its publication, unless some new attack should be made from the press by the non-subscribers—certainly a very insufficient reason. An adequate defence of the synod was loudly demanded, and it could not have appeared more seasonably; for, at that very time, there was actually in the press one of the most direct

<sup>80</sup> "The Wodrow Correspondence," vol. iii. pp. 92, 93; "Narrative of Seven Synods," pp. 132, 133.

<sup>81</sup> The full title was, "An Apology for the Northern Presbyterians in Ireland; wherein Requiring Subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith as a Condition of Ministerial Communion among them is justified. In Answer to the Seasonable Advice from Dublin, and other late Performances Published in Opposition to the Practice of the best Reformed Churches relating to Creeds and Confessions." Glasgow, 1723, 4to, pp. 55. It was printed in Glasgow, under the superintendence of the Rev. Mr. Hemphill, minister of Castleblayney, who prefixed a short preface. It was published in the month of November.



and plausible attacks on the principle of subscription which appeared throughout the entire controversy. Mr. Masterton followed very closely the anonymous author of the "Seasonable Advice," for Mr. Abernethy had not yet acknowledged it, correcting his misstatements, and replying to his reasonings. He set forth, with considerable perspicuity and cogency, the usual arguments in favour of subscription, and vindicated the laity from the charge of being unreasonably distrustful of the non-subscribing ministers, and of being dissatisfied with them without a cause. This portion of his work he closed with the following pertinent remarks:—"It is with no small reluctance that I have recited these reasons of the people's discontent, which this author [Mr. Abernethy] has taken very little notice of; and by neglecting to obviate the principle reasons of their dissatisfaction, his 'Advice' must be of the less use in the North. The more judicious of the people are far from charging these non-subscribing ministers with errors in their principles or practice but such as they can make appear from their public speeches and printed dissertations; viz., 'That by the authority of God a man is obliged to follow the dictates of an erring conscience, that there is no moral evil in an erroneous judgment, that subscribing to the Scripture is a sufficient credible profession to entitle a man to ministerial communion in any reformed Church, and that to require intrants into the ministry to declare their faith in any human words as a condition of ministerial communion is a criminal adding to the laws of Christ, usurping upon his kingly office, &c. These and the like principles, which are contrary to the known principles of this Church, they very unseasonably and with great industry have published and propagated; and if the difference betwixt subscribers and non-subscribers be of very small moment, as the non-subscribers assure us it is, they were the more blameworthy in disturbing the peace of this Church, and in using such vigorous and united efforts to have their own principles disseminated."<sup>82</sup>

About two months after the publication of this "Apology," that attack on subscription, to which reference has just been

<sup>82</sup> Pages 41, 42.

made, was at length published. It bore the name of Mr. Haliday, being his first appearance in this controversy; but it was well known that he received considerable assistance in compiling it from others of his party, and it was alleged to have been revised by the Dublin non-subscribers before it was committed to the press. Early in the month of February, it appeared with this title, "Reasons Against the Imposition of Subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, or any such Human Tests of Orthodoxy; together with Answers to the Arguments for such Impositions."<sup>83</sup> Having explained the terms of the proposition which he undertook to establish, he divided his work into two parts. In the first, he groups his "Reasons" against subscription under four general heads, which he illustrates at considerable length; and, in the second, he undertakes to answer the arguments which had been urged, both in Ireland and elsewhere, in favour of subscription. He draws none of his "Reasons" from the articles of the confession, though he hints at its comprising several disputable propositions, and objects very strongly to the many non-essential doctrines which he alleges are contained in it, though he refrains from naming any such. His main object is to condemn submitting to human tests of Divine truths (which, however, is by no means a correct statement of what is implied in subscription to a creed) as unscriptural, ensnaring, and inconsistent. His reasoning wants the point and terseness of Mr. Abernethy's, but his style is equally correct and pleasing, while the spirit in which he writes is free from acrimony, and, with the exception of the preface, he carefully abstains from personalities. But though this performance is the most comprehensive, and at the same time the most plausible one, that appeared on the non-subscribing side, it was not very formidable to those who had studied the controversy, and, in a few months, it received an ample and elaborate refutation.

This work had scarcely appeared when its author and Mr. Kirkpatrick took a step which, whether so intended or not, greatly annoyed and embarrassed the subscribing congregation

<sup>83</sup> Belfast, 1724, 8vo, pp. xvi. and 152.

in Belfast. Mr. Masterton had, some time previously, announced his intention of holding his first communion on the last Sabbath of February ; and as his people had withdrawn from the other congregations, on the avowed ground of their ministers being non-subscribers, and as this step had been repeatedly denounced by these ministers as schismatical, and therefore sinful, he never doubted that, while many persons still adhering to those congregations, though dissatisfied with the conduct and views of their pastors, would join with him and his people in this ordinance, the two ministers themselves would carefully abstain from any such personal sanction of their unscriptural schism. To his great surprise, therefore, on the morning of the fast-day—and not till then—Messrs. Kirkpatrick and Haliday wrote to Mr. Masterton, intimating their intention of joining with him in his communion, and requesting him to give notice from his pulpit, that after the service of that day, they would distribute tokens to such members of their congregations as wished to follow their example. Notice to this effect, so far as their people were concerned, was given, and many applied for and received tokens. But Mr. Masterton and his session were much perplexed with the offer of these ministers, whose speeches and writings, especially during the last few months, had rendered them so offensive to the pious members of the Church, and of that new congregation in particular. This perplexity clearly evinced the inconsistent and indefensible position which the synod had occupied almost from the very commencement of these debates—on the one hand asserting its constitutional principle of subscription as indispensable to the purity and safety of the Church, yet maintaining communion with ministers who, by every means, both public and private, were opening a door for the admission of error and heresy—upholding Presbyterian government and discipline, yet countenancing those who avowedly spurned and violated it—making light of the points in debate between the parties, and on that ground recommending their people to adhere to non-subscribing and anti-Presbyterian ministers, yet sanctioning separation from them, by forming those who scrupled communion with them into separate congregations ! These inconsistencies were rendered most palpable by this extra-

ordinary offer of Messrs. Kirkpatrick and Haliday. So long as these ministers were members of the same Church and the same judicatories with Mr. Masterton, they were surely entitled to be partakers with him of the same ordinances. And yet to have received *them*, as communicants, would have convicted himself and his people of schism, and been a public repudiation of the principles on which alone the formation of their congregation could be vindicated. In this dilemma, in which many believed it was the sole object of this application to place them, Mr. Masterton and his session wrote to them, requesting that, for the sake of peace, and to avoid giving offence, they would forbear communicating with them on that occasion. But this forbearance they refused to exercise, and insisted on their right to join in communion, unless actually excluded by order of the session. In their reply, Mr. Masterton's elders once more "entreated their forbearance for this time, as they valued the edification of many," and expressed their hope that they would not, by persisting, "attempt to disturb the solemn work" then in hand. This communication Messrs. Kirkpatrick and Haliday were pleased to interpret as amounting to a formal exclusion, and, on that ground, they at length abandoned their design.<sup>84</sup>

This incident seems to have opened the eyes of many to the false position in which the synod had placed itself. Since the last annual meeting, a large number of the lay members of the Church had become more and more dissatisfied with the policy which had been acted on towards the non-subscribers. Their suspicions, too, of the orthodoxy of those ministers were strengthened by each successive stage in their opposition to the measures of the synod.

<sup>84</sup> The letters which passed on this occasion between Messrs. Kirkpatrick and Haliday and Mr. Masterton's session, will be found in the preface to Kirkpatrick's "Scripture Plea," p. 5, &c., where the subject is fully discussed from the non-subscribing point of view. (See also some additional information, though inaccurate in the details, in Wodrow's "Annals," vol. iii. p. 151.) Mr. Masterton's session at this time consisted of the following elders:—William Sim, John Brown, James Brown, Thomas Martin, Samuel Smith, John M'Mun, Robert Lennox, William Mitchell, Nathaniel Wilson, and William Stevenson. See Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 83.



These persons were, therefore, decidedly of opinion, that so long as the non-subscribers persisted in their ambiguous line of conduct and their latitudinarian views, so inconsistent with the purity, and safety, and peace of the Church, it was the duty of the synod, in some way or other, to withhold its countenance from them. But as the majority of that body still clung to these erring brethren, and insisted on maintaining communion with them, this portion of the people determined to keep themselves clear from any such responsibility, and to testify their disapproval of the inconsistent, and, as they viewed it, the unfaithful conduct of the synod. In several presbyteries, accordingly, vacant congregations refused to admit into their pulpits non-subscribing ministers, or licentiates who favoured that party. Subscribing ministers were obliged, for the sake of peace, and in deference to the earnest remonstrances of their own people, to cease employing them at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and in other ministerial duties. A remarkable instance of this practical breach of communion occurred in the county of Antrim, in the early part of this year. The congregation of Connor, vacant by the removal of Mr. Masterton to Belfast, had called the Rev. Robert M'Master to be their minister, and a day was fixed for his ordination. But, in consequence of the presbytery having appointed the Rev. Mr. Henderson of Dunearn, an early member of the Belfast Society, and a non-subscriber, to preach on that occasion, the people, who had previously protested against such an appointment, shut up the church, and refused to permit the ordination to take place. The presbytery, in which there were many non-subscribers, with Mr. Abernethy at their head, were obliged to acquiesce. They appointed a new day for the ordination, and procured Mr. Masterton to preach and preside. Under his auspices the service was reverently performed on the 18th of March, though even the admission of the non-subscribers, to lay on hands in the act of ordination, was viewed by the people with great dissatisfaction.<sup>85</sup>

In other parts of the province, where there were few non-

<sup>85</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 87.

subscribers, though there was little external disquiet, there was an equally resolute determination, on the part of the great bulk of the people, to avoid all communication with that party. Their opinion was, and they did not hesitate to press it on their ministers, that the synod should delay no longer to demand from the non-subscribers a declaration of their belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, and that a law should be passed preventing every one from sitting in the courts of the Church who had not subscribed her standards. During this spring, various measures were discussed, by the subscribing ministers and elders, for accomplishing these objects. One was, to require all members of presbyteries and synods to subscribe the Shorter Catechism, as being free from several objections which the non-subscribers urged against the Westminster Confession. Another was, to require a declaration of belief in the Divine authority of Presbyterian government, and in the duty of submission thereto, as expressed in the confession.<sup>86</sup> But on consulting their friends in Scotland, and finding them unfavourable to these measures, they were laid aside.<sup>87</sup> In the sub-synod of Derry, which met in May, several members conceiving themselves able to prove the inaccuracy of the statements in the synod's minutes in 1721, which alleged that the non-subscribers, though they opposed the declaration of faith in the Deity of Christ, had expressed their belief in that doctrine "in the strongest terms," prepared an overture, urging the synod, at its approaching annual meeting, to inquire into the truth of that allegation in their minutes. But though this overture received the sanction of the sub-synod, it also appears to have been dropped. This meeting, it may be added, drew up an excellent address to the people under their care, which they published with this title, "A Seasonable Warning from the Synod of Londonderry to the several Congregations within their bounds, against the Errors and Immoralities of the Present Age."<sup>88</sup> This paper was widely circulated, and tended to quiet the apprehensions of

<sup>86</sup> Chapter xxxi., section 3. See Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 85.

<sup>87</sup> "The Wodrow Correspondence," vol. iii. pp. 141, 142.

<sup>88</sup> Printed in the year 1724, 12mo, pp. 12. It was probably printed at Belfast, as I do not think there was a press at this date in Londonderry.

the people, and to satisfy them that a large body of ministers and elders were firm in upholding the doctrines and constitution of the Church.

This publication was succeeded by another in defence of the truth, but more directly controversial. So soon as Mr. Haliday's "Reasons against Subscription" had appeared, several of the subscribing ministers united in drawing up a reply. They generally met at Stewartstown, in the county of Tyrone, to read and revise their respective contributions, which were finally committed to Mr. Kennedy of Tullylish, who was the principal writer, to be carried through the press. The work appeared in the month of June, under the title of "A Defence of the Principles and Conduct of the General Synod of Ulster."<sup>89</sup> It is an elaborate performance, and reviews in order the entire of Mr. Haliday's "Reasons," to which it furnishes full and satisfactory answers. But its occasional personalities, and its passionate reproaches of the opposite party, must have detracted much from its weight in those quarters where it was most needed—among the intelligent laity who sympathised with the non-subscribers. At the very same time appeared Mr. Abernethy's "Defence of his Seasonable Advice, in Answer to Mr. Masterton's Apology."<sup>90</sup> It also contained a postscript from the Dublin ministers, Messrs. Weld, Boyse, and Choppin, vindicating their "preface" to the "Seasonable Advice" from the strictures of Mr. Masterton. This tedious and prolix work had been very hastily compiled, and is by no means a favourable specimen of this writer's temper or ability. These publications, from leading men on opposite sides

<sup>89</sup> The following is the remainder of the title—"Being an Answer to a Pamphlet published by the Rev. Mr. Samuel Haliday, containing his Reasons against the Imposition of Subscription unto the Westminster Confession, or any such Human Tests of Orthodoxy. Published by the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Kennedy." Belfast, 1724, 4to, pp. viii., 30, and 125—the largest work that had yet appeared in this controversy, but it was exceeded in size by the pamphlet next named.

<sup>90</sup> The title thus continued—"Wherein the Differences between the Subscribers and Non-Subscribers are stated, and the Reasonableness of their continuing in Communion is proved." Belfast, 1724, 8vo, pp. viii. and 216.

of the controversy, added much to the excitement now everywhere prevalent.

As the annual meeting of synod once more drew nigh, great interest was felt with respect to the questions likely to come before it, and the probable issue of its deliberations. In the midst of these anticipations, an unexpected subject was furnished for its consideration, by one of the non-subscribers, Mr. Nevin of Downpatrick. In the previous year, this minister, conversing on the subject of the Trinity in a company at Downpatrick, either in stating the arguments of the opponents to that doctrine, or in giving utterance to his own opinions, had so expressed himself as to provoke one Mr. Echlin of Bangor, a gentleman of the Established Church, to call him an Arian, and to represent him as such in various places. Mr. Nevin called upon him to retract this imputation, and on his refusal commenced an action against him for defamation, which was ultimately set down for trial at the assizes in the ensuing July.<sup>91</sup> In the meantime, Mr. Echlin having heard of another conversation, in the end of the same year, in the house of Captain Hannington of Moneyrea, near Belfast, in which Mr. Nevin had been represented as using offensive expressions with respect to the Deity of Christ, he eagerly laid hold of them to aid him in defending himself against Mr. Nevin's action at law. Had it not been for this circumstance, it is probable that this latter conversation would have attracted little attention; but it was now rendered so notorious through personal animosity, calling to its aid theological opposition, that some account of it becomes necessary. The subject of this conversation was the power of the civil magistrate to suppress blasphemy, as laid down in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Mr. Nevin objected to such a power, for this, among other reasons, that it would compel the state to put to death the Jews, who denied the Deity of the Messiah, and thus defeat the prophecies which spoke of their continued testimony to the truth of Christianity, and their ultimate conversion to it. On being asked, was not such a denial sinful in them? he admitted

<sup>91</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 92. The "Wodrow Correspondence," vol. iii. p. 116, note.



it to be a sin, but not such a sin as exposed them to secular punishment. Being further interrogated, was not such a denial on their part blasphemy? he replied that it was no blasphemy in them to deny Christ to be God, which he afterwards explained to mean, that it was no such blasphemy as deserved to be punished by the civil magistrate. The remainder of the conversation it is unnecessary to detail. The report soon spread that Mr. Nevin had asserted absolutely it was no blasphemy to deny Christ to be God; and, as soon as this rumour reached Mr. Nevin, in company with a friend, he called on Captain Hannington in the beginning of this year, when he remonstrated with him for having misrepresented the conversation, and endeavoured to set him right as to its real purport. For several months after this interview, no importance seems to have been attached to the report in question, till at length, at the instigation of Mr. Echlin, in the end of May, Captain Hannington went before a magistrate in Comber, and, accompanied by his servant and a third person, they joined in an affidavit, to the effect, that Mr. Nevin had positively averred "it was no blasphemy to say Christ is not God." This document, duly authenticated, was carefully circulated, and, as it stood, justly excited the indignation of the ministers and people attached to the subscribing party, who regarded it as a satisfactory proof of what many of them had all along suspected—the unsoundness in the faith of the non-subscribers generally. The Rev. Mr. Smith of Ballee having obtained a copy of this affidavit, sent it to Mr. Nevin, who, in the second week of June, published it in a letter to that minister, in which he related all the circumstances of the conversation in question, explained the connection and meaning of the obnoxious expression with which he was charged, and avowed his belief in the Deity of the Saviour. Had he confined himself simply to his own vindication, this letter would have been much more satisfactory than it proved to be. But he expressed himself on incidental topics with blameable levity, irreverently applying a passage of Scripture to his accuser; and he laid himself open to the charge of retracting the profession of faith in the Deity of Christ, in which he had joined at the synod in 1721.

This letter he printed;<sup>92</sup> and, bringing copies with him, he circulated them among the members of synod now sitting at Dungannon.

This synod met under circumstances of unusual excitement. The renewal of the trial of Colonel Upton's appeal, the expected proposals for compulsory subscription in one shape or other, and the new cause of offence afforded by Mr. Nevin's conduct and printed letter, all conspired to impart the deepest interest to this meeting. It was attended by one hundred and twenty-three ministers, and one hundred and six elders—a larger number of members than had been present either at any previous synod or at any subsequent one for more than a century, while the elders were more numerous than even during the exciting controversies of recent times, when the number of congregations had been more than doubled.<sup>93</sup> Colonel Upton not being able to attend this meeting, the consideration of his appeal was postponed to next synod; but ere it met, this distinguished and valuable member of the Church was removed by death. The proposals for a compulsory subscription, whether of the Shorter Catechism or of the Confession, had been laid aside, so that the only case of public interest which occupied this meeting was that of Mr. Nevin. Of this case there have been preserved the fullest details, especially in a long and elaborate narrative, published by Mr. Nevin himself, and forming an octavo volume of nearly three hundred pages.<sup>94</sup> A general outline of it is, therefore, all that seems necessary to be inserted here.

<sup>92</sup> It is entitled, "A Letter to the Rev. Mr. William Smith of Ballee." Belfast, 1724, 8vo, pp. 12.

<sup>93</sup> The largest number of ministers present at any meeting of the synod, down to the formation of the General Assembly, was 233 ministers in the year 1840, yet there were only 86 elders present, and the largest number of elders was in the years 1828 and 1829, when 95 were present.

<sup>94</sup> This volume was published in the month of January following, with this title, "The Trial of Thomas Nevin, M.A., pastor of a Church of the Presbyterian denomination in Downpatrick, before the General Synod which met at Dungannon, June 16, 1724, and was continued by several adjournments to the 26th of that month: Containing Mr. Nevin's letter for which he was processed; the libel against him; his answer to it laid before the

So soon as Mr. Nevin's printed letter appeared in Dungannon, the Rev. Samuel Henry, minister of Sligo, drew the attention of the synod to it, and stated that, in common with a number of his brethren, "he had not freedom to sit in synod with Mr. Nevin till he gave satisfaction as to the matter charged upon him in Mr. Hannyngton's affidavit." Had Mr. Nevin acted as his party had done at the previous synod, and put this meeting on proving either this letter to be his, or the affidavit contained in it to be genuine, no further step could have been taken in the matter, as such a proof could only have been taken in Belfast or Downpatrick. And, indeed, the obvious and proper course of proceeding would have been, to have remitted the case to the presbytery of Down, with instructions to deal with it according to the discipline of the Church. But Mr. Nevin at once owned the letter to be his, and admitted the genuineness of the affidavit against himself, adding an explanation of it tantamount to what he had already given in his printed letter. The synod thereupon resolved to enter on the trial of Mr. Nevin forthwith, though they soon found themselves obliged to remit one-half of the charges brought against him to be investigated by his presbytery. They first of all appointed a committee, consisting of a few of the leading subscribing ministers,<sup>95</sup> to draw up articles against him,

synod; their proceedings on five articles of the libel, particularly their new inquisitory discipline on the fifth article; reasons of the protestation of divers worthy ministers and elders against their inquisitory and exclusive decisions; with general observations on the whole trial. Faithfully collected from the Minutes of the Synod and other authentic vouchers, and published by the said Thomas Nevin." Belfast, 1725, pp. xxiv. and 255. In this work he gives a full account of all the arguments used on both sides, which he obtained from short-hand notes taken in synod by the Rev. Patrick Simpson, minister of Dundalk, (nephew of the well-known Professor Simpson of Glasgow University), who, though a subscriber of the confession, uniformly supported, and ultimately joined the non-subscribing party. The synod disliked very much this note-taking, and endeavoured to put a stop to it, but without success. See Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 100.

<sup>95</sup> This committee consisted of the Rev. Mr. Henry of Sligo, Mr. Gray, then of Usher's Quay, Dublin, Mr. Boyd of Macosquin, Mr. M'Bride of Ballymoney, Mr. Thomas Kennedy of Brigh, and Mr. Gilbert Kennedy of Tullylish.

which, to the number of six, they produced the next morning ; and these having been read in synod, Mr. Nevin was allowed to the following day to give in a written answer. It was not until the beginning of the second week of its meeting that the synod entered formally on the trial of these charges. Each article of the libel was read, then Mr. Nevin's written answer to it was subjoined, and the committee in charge of the case replied. The result was, that the first three articles were referred to the presbytery of Down to be investigated and issued by them ; the fourth was agreed to be dropped, after it had occupied the synod the greater part of two days. The fifth constituted the crisis of the case, and must, therefore, be noticed somewhat more fully. It charged Mr. Nevin with having said in his printed letter, that whereas he had made a profession of faith in the Saviour's Deity before the synod in 1721, he was now sorry he had ever done so, and would take care for the future that no temptation would make him venture so far again. These words were, indeed, in the printed letter, but they occurred in two distinct paragraphs, at the distance of twenty lines from each other, yet they were quoted by the committee as if they formed one continuous sentence, and were thereby made to convey a sentiment which Mr. Nevin in his answer expressly disavowed. As the article reads, it would imply that Mr. Nevin had changed his mind since the year 1721 with regard to the Saviour's Deity, whereas, what he stated in his letter amounted only to this, that while, for the sake of peace and the removal of suspicions of his unsoundness in the faith, he had in that year declared his belief in the doctrine of the Saviour's Deity "in the strongest terms ;" yet, if that act of his was understood to countenance such an unjust and unchristian method of issuing scandal, as that of first charging a man with heresy, and then demanding of him to clear himself by answering such questions, or subscribing such declarations as may be required of him, he now expressed his sorrow that he had ever given in to such an inquisitorial way of issuing scandals, and resolved never to do so again. At the same time, he added, that by this principle he was determined to abide. A long and keen debate ensued, during which satisfactory proofs were laid



before the synod of Mr. Nevin's orthodoxy in this cardinal point of the Saviour's Deity, by Mr. Boyse, who heard him, in his pulpit in Dublin, prove that doctrine by solid arguments, and refute the Arian scheme to his great satisfaction; by Mr. Henry of Sligo, the originator of the trial, who had received full satisfaction from Mr. Nevin, since the trial began, that he was as orthodox in that point as any in the synod, and by several other brethren.<sup>96</sup> Yet the synod, disregarding these testimonies, and fully aware of Mr. Nevin's determination not to clear himself, under existing circumstances, by any declaration or subscription, resolved not to inquire farther into the truth or relevancy of this fifth article, but to require of him an immediate declaration of his belief in the supreme Deity of Christ. With this demand, as was to be expected, he refused to comply, on the principle so frequently avowed by the non-subscribers, that to clear himself by any such method was directly sinful; but adding, that his refusal did not proceed from any disbelief of the doctrine of the supreme Deity of Christ. Nothing, therefore, could be held to be proved against him, beyond the fact of his being a non-subscriber like the rest of his party. Yet it was moved, that as Mr. Nevin had refused to make the declaration required of him, the synod should hold no further ministerial communion with him, nor proceed any farther in his trial. This motion was carried on the night of Friday, in the second week of the meeting, by a large majority, but in a very thin house, consisting of less than fifty members. The minority consisted of the usual non-subscribers and their elders, with a few other ministers who protested against the vote, and joined in this declaration, which was recorded in the minutes, "that they think themselves bound by the laws of the Gospel to maintain ministerial communion with Mr. Nevin, notwithstanding the resolution of this synod excluding him, which they look upon as unjust and unwarrantable, because convicted of no scandal."<sup>97</sup> In the majority there were only thirty-two ministers;<sup>98</sup> thirty-four or thirty-five votes had

<sup>96</sup> Nevin's "Trial," &c., pp. 170-72.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 156.

<sup>98</sup> This small number of ministers may be partly accounted for by the late-

actually been given for the motion; but of these, two at least were fictitious, some unprincipled partisans of the subscribing party having fraudulently answered to the names of two ministers who had left Dungannon previous to the vote,<sup>99</sup> and the name of a third, who had also left town, appeared in the majority, but it could not be ascertained whether, as in the other cases, any one had answered for him at the call of the roll.<sup>100</sup> By this motion Mr. Nevin was cut off from communion from the synod, but, strange to say, he was neither disjoined from his congregation, nor deposed from the ministerial office—a novel species of censure, hitherto unknown in the Church's discipline.

Such was the issue of this protracted trial, hastily undertaken by the synod in a moment of unwonted excitement, persisted in contrary to established usage, till they were compelled to remit it to the presbytery with whom it ought to have originated, and abruptly terminated by a sentence, which was as unjust to the individual as it was injurious to their character as impartial and dispassionate judges. In truth, this synod, like too many popular assemblies, was the dupe of their own suspicions and apprehensions. They were hurried on by their eagerness to signalise this meeting by some decided testimony against prevalent errors. They conceived that the time had come when a blow must be struck at non-subscription; and in this state of mind the opportunity of establishing the connection, so long suspected, between that system and Arianism, was too tempting to be overlooked. Hence the undue eagerness with which they seized on this case

ness of the time when the vote was taken, many ministers having, no doubt, been previously obliged to return home. But this apology cannot be pleaded for many well-known subscribing ministers who lived not far from Dungannon, yet were not present at the vote. I cannot but believe that many of that party saw the impropriety of the course adopted by the synod, when it was too late to rectify it, and preferred absenting themselves to embarrassing their friends by a hostile vote. It is quite obvious that the conduct of the synod in this case did not meet the approbation of their Scottish friends, after they had the opportunity of reading Nevin's account of it. See "The Wodrow Correspondence," vol. iii. pp. 170, 171.

<sup>99</sup> Nevin's "Trial," p. 239.

<sup>100</sup> Nevin's "Review of his Trial," &c., p. 91.

of Mr. Nevin, and prosecuted it to his exclusion from the synod, by high-handed authority; yet all the while they were tolerating and retaining in communion the other non-subscribers, all of whom they might have excluded by the very same process, and who, to their former acts of insubordination, now added this new offence of unananimously declaring that, in despite of the sentence of the synod, they would persist in holding communion with Mr. Nevin—a provocation which was also unaccountably overlooked. If not chargeable with injustice in this case, the synod must at least be condemned as partial and inconsistent.

The peculiar nature of the sentence passed on Mr. Nevin—depriving him of ministerial communion with the synod, but not of his ministerial character, and recognising him as still minister of Downpatrick, by refraining from declaring his congregation vacant—soon occasioned no little embarrassment both in the presbytery and sub-synod, of which he was a member. When the presbytery of Down met in August, their first meeting after the synod, Mr. Mairs, the clerk, insisted on calling Mr. Nevin's name as a member of the court, notwithstanding the sentence of the synod. And when this was objected to, the non-subscribers and their friends carried a very preposterous motion, to this effect, that as the presbytery could not exclude Mr. Nevin, except by their own vote after hearing his case, so they would now proceed to re-hear what had already been issued by the General Synod. After several manœuvres by that party, this motion was carried; but the subscribing ministers, having protested against it, left the meeting, and refused to sit as members of the court, so long as the authority of the synod should be thus contemned.<sup>101</sup> But when the presbytery met in the following month, as these ministers persisted in their refusal to act, the friends of Mr. Nevin abandoned their untenable position, and he was declared to be no longer a member; Mr. Mairs was relieved of the office of clerk, and the presbytery proceeded with their usual

<sup>101</sup> These ministers were the Rev. Henry Hamilton of Donaghadee, the Rev. John Goudy of Ballywalter, the Rev. James Macalpin of Ballynahinch, the Rev. William Biggar of Bangor, the Rev. Nathaniel Orr of Ballyhalbert, and the Rev. Francis Montgomery of Castlereagh.

business.<sup>102</sup> They were now occupied with serious disagreements, which had broken out in the congregation of Comber, under their care. In this congregation, vacant by the death of the Rev. Thomas Orr, one of the earliest members of the Belfast Society, the Rev. John Orr, probably his son, was ordained as minister on the 6th of January in this year. Though a subscriber, this young man immediately signalled himself by his violent support of the non-subscribing party; and to such a length did he carry it, especially at and after this synod, that the greater portion of his congregation applied to the presbytery, at a special meeting held in Comber in the month of August, to loose the relation between him and them, which had subsisted little more than half a year. Above one hundred of the most substantial families joined in this application, while not more than twenty families were in favour of retaining him.<sup>103</sup> Owing to the influence of the non-subscribers in the presbytery, a schism in this old and respectable congregation was in the meantime prevented. But, in proportion as it was repressed, the alienation of the people increased, till it vented itself in a violent collision in the following year.<sup>104</sup>

Similar dissatisfaction was manifested in various places imme-

<sup>102</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., Nos. 74 and 92.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, vol. xxi., No. 88.

<sup>104</sup> Soon after the synod in 1725, when their minister, Mr. Orr, had joined the newly-formed non-subscribing presbytery of Antrim, the people attached to the synod, who constituted the great bulk of the congregation, took possession of their meeting-house on the 20th of July, and prevented Mr. Orr from officiating in it. But the non-subscribing party, though a small minority, had the influence to get the local magistracy and the high-sheriff to eject their opponents, and hand over the house to them. The orthodox party were consequently obliged to commence an action at law to recover their property, and at length obtained a verdict reinstating them in possession of their meeting-house; the judge who tried the case observing that "Mr. Orr was more like a wolf or a tyrant than a minister, to conspire against the people as he had done." This suit cost them £120—a large sum in those days. (Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 113, and "The Narrative of the Non-Subscribers Examined," pp. 35, 36.) I have not been able to ascertain what became of Mr. Orr and his few adherents in this place after the meeting-house had reverted to the synod.



diately after the late meeting of synod. The popular feeling now prevalent is thus described by a minister, writing to a friend in Scotland in the month of September :—" A considerable number of the people in those congregations whose ministers protested against the synod's resolution concerning Mr. Nevin, and who declared they would keep communion with him, have now withdrawn themselves from hearing these ministers, and apply themselves to their respective presbyteries for liberty to join neighbouring ministers. Their great complaint is, that whereas their ministers subscribed the confession, and promised solemnly to adhere to our Presbyterian government, yet now seem to act a contrary part in violent opposition to all the synod's measures for preserving truth and discipline ; they therefore suspect the sincerity of these ministers very much, and will trust them no longer. Nay, the people stand not to say that they have a worse opinion of those ministers who themselves subscribe and yet do what they can to support Mr. Nevin and defend non-subscription, than they have even of Mr. Nevin himself or the non-subscribers."<sup>105</sup> On this ground it was that the presbytery of Route took cognisance of the conduct of the Rev. Mr. Elder, who had been ordained in the congregation of Aghadoey about a year before. Though he had not voted in Mr. Nevin's case at the synod, he had, on his return home, expressed his disapprobation of the sentence against him very offensively, had inveighed against the subscribing ministers who concurred therein, and had spoken very freely of some of the members of his own presbytery as partial and unjust judges. In the end of August, the presbytery publicly reprimanded him for these misdemeanours ; and, two months later, they suspended him till the meeting of the sub-synod of Derry in the following May, for declining their authority and jurisdiction. How far this sentence was executed, or under what circumstances it was recalled, cannot now be ascertained. He continued to be minister of Aghadoey, but most of his brethren refused to assist at his sacrament, or even to be present where he officiated.

<sup>105</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 92. The postscript.

To check this practice of refusing to hold communion with the non-subscribers and their supporters, which was now becoming prevalent throughout Ulster, Mr. Kirkpatrick of Belfast, in the early part of September, published a work on which he had been engaged since the first manifestation of this spirit at Mr. Masterton's communion in the previous February. This publication was entitled, "A Scripture Plea against a fatal rupture and breach of Christian communion amongst the Presbyterians in the North of Ireland."<sup>106</sup> In the preface he gives a full account of what took place between himself and Mr. Haliday, and Mr. Masterton's session, when they proposed to join with the latter in the Lord's Supper, which attracted so much attention at the time, and which had induced him to prepare and publish this work. He discusses the question, whether the maintenance of non-subscribing principles be a just ground for refusing to hold communion with ministers. The arguments in favour of holding communion with them he sets forth, in the first part of the pamphlet, with great plausibility, but his reasoning proceeds on the assumption, that all non-subscribers are sound in the faith, which it is obvious is only a begging of the question at issue. In professing, in the second part, to answer the objections of subscribers, he merely attempts to refute the principle which had been affirmed by the synod in 1723, "that non-subscription opened a door to let in errors and heresies into the Church." And, in the last part, he endeavours to demonstrate the mischief of either party abstaining voluntarily from communion with the other, for the sake of peace or edification. The work is written with much vigour, and presents a more favourable specimen of his style as a writer, and his ability as a polemic, than his previous work, "The Vindication," published by Dr. Ferguson.

Mr. Nevin's "Account of his Trial," already mentioned, was the next publication which issued from the press. It appeared a day or two before the meeting of the sub-synod of Belfast, in the first week of January, and formed the ground on which its author pleaded to be received as a member of that court,

<sup>106</sup> Belfast, 1724, 8vo, pp. xii. and 91.

though disowned by the General Synod, and rejected by his own presbytery. This meeting was opened by a sermon from Mr. Bruce of Holywood, the previous moderator, in support of Mr. Kirkpatrick's views in his recent pamphlet; and he soon after published it, with this title, "The Duty of Christians to live together in religious communion recommended."<sup>107</sup> When the clerk called the name of Mr. Nevin, which was still on the roll of this synod, the latter, being purposely present, answered to it, and proceeded to insist on his right to sit and vote. This preposterous claim occasioned a violent debate, which was prolonged through the greater part of two days. A large assemblage of people of all denominations crowded the house, before whom the non-subscribers took the opportunity—which it was, no doubt, the main object of Mr. Nevin's claim to afford them—of condemning, in the strongest terms, the conduct of the synod in his case, and of advocating, at the same time, their peculiar views. Mr. Haliday denounced the resolution calling on Mr. Nevin to declare his belief in the Deity of the Saviour as an unrighteous inquisition—nay, as the very worst part of the Spanish inquisition, because it required men to declare their secret sentiments.<sup>108</sup> The debate was closed late on the second day of meeting, by a member formally protesting against Mr. Nevin's name being continued on the roll, and inviting those who concurred in this view to join in this protest. Owing to the confusion in the house, the protestors, who turned out to be a large majority of the synod, including both the moderator and clerk, were obliged to retire to prepare and sign the document. But the non-subscribers, who appear to have been supported by the audience, taking advantage of the absence of these members, hastily appointed a new moderator and clerk, admitted Mr. Nevin to his seat, and affected to proceed with the business of the court. When the majority returned with their protest, so great was the disorder in the house, that they could not get it received—a part of the preconcerted scheme—and after several attempts to restore order, the synod was dissolved in the most disgraceful confusion, without having

<sup>107</sup> Belfast, 1725, 8vo, pp. 35.

<sup>108</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 94.

transacted any business whatever.<sup>109</sup> Though it was thus quite obvious that the non-subscribing party had determined to destroy the peace and impair the authority of those courts of the Church in which they possessed any influence, and that a separation was the only remedy for this increasing evil, yet one is surprised to find that another year and a half elapsed before it was applied.

The non-subscribers, greatly to the credit of their talents and zeal, still held possession of the field of literary combat. Since the last synod, no work had appeared on the side of the subscribers, while, in addition to those by Kirkpatrick, Nevin, and Bruce, two others now issued from the same quarter. One of these appeared in February, from the pen of Mr. Haliday, entitled, "A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Kennedy, occasioned by some Personal Reflections contained in his Answer to Mr. Haliday's 'Reasons,'" &c.<sup>110</sup> In this publication, he vindicates himself against a charge, or rather two charges, brought against him by Mr. Kennedy. The first of these was founded on a private conversation which he had held with a friend, who had reported it to Mr. Kennedy, wherein he had denied that article in the Westminster Confession which states, in opposition to the Eutychian heresy, that the two natures of Christ were united "in one person, without conversion, *composition*, or confusion."<sup>111</sup> Mr. Haliday, while he complains of the underhand means by which this opinion of his had been divulged, now publicly defends it, but on the mistaken ground that the doctrine of the confession was equivalent to an assertion that Christ was not a compound person, whereas it was directed solely against the assertion that the two natures were so compounded, or so united together, as to destroy their distinct existence, and to form only one *nature* as well

<sup>109</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 93. Twenty-one ministers and seventeen elders subscribed the protest against the retaining of Mr. Nevin's name on the roll; three other ministers protested, merely on the ground of its being inexpedient; and five ministers, known by the name of trimmers, declined to protest, but joined in a declaration of opinion, that, under existing circumstances, his name ought not to be called.

<sup>110</sup> Belfast, 1725, 8vo. pp. 67.

<sup>111</sup> "Westminster Confession of Faith," chap. viii., sec. 2.



as one *person*. The other charge which he rebuts is, that he held Arian or semi-Arian principles; and in its refutation he produces a number of testimonies, proving that he was a believer in the doctrine of the Trinity and the supreme Deity of the Saviour.<sup>112</sup> In the close of his pamphlet he inserts an anonymous communication, but well known to be from Mr. Mairs of Newtownards, vindicating himself from charges of heresy which Mr. Kennedy had also inserted in his work, and that, too, on the evidence of private and confidential communications.<sup>113</sup> The other publication on the same side, which appeared a few weeks after Mr. Haliday's letter, was from the pen of a professed subscriber, but one who had already attained considerable notoriety in his district for his warm support of the non-subscribing party. This was the Rev. Mr. Elder of Aghadoey, who, in the month of March, published "Reasons for Moderation in the Present Debates amongst Presbyterians in the North of Ireland."<sup>114</sup> He does not, of course, directly advocate non-subscribing principles, but he strenuously supports the cause of that party, by representing the question of subscription as one of little or no importance to the Church's interests, and on which opposite sides may be taken without involving any breach of communion.

While the non-subscribers were thus openly and vigorously defending their cause from the press with great skill and talent, they clandestinely encouraged a proceeding for augmenting their party, and defeating the discipline of the synod, which justly excited great animosity. The congregation of Dromore, in the county of Down, had become vacant, in the close of the year 1719, by the death of the Rev. Alexander Colville, one of the early members of the Belfast Society, who had successfully inculcated his latitudinarian views on too many members of his charge. They continued vacant for some years, waiting, it is said, till the son of their late minister, and of the same name, should have completed his course for the ministry. At length, in the year 1724, they gave a call to this young man, the Rev. Alexander

<sup>112</sup> "Letter," pp. 45-48.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, pp. 56-66.

<sup>114</sup> Belfast, 1725, 8vo, pp. viii. and 108.

Colville, M.D., who had been licensed by the presbytery of Cupar, in Scotland,<sup>115</sup> and who soon made himself known as a more violent opponent of subscription than his father had been. His extreme non-subscribing views, though he had just come over from giving an unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, raised up a party in the congregation who opposed his settlement, on the ground of erroneous views relative to the Trinity. The case was carried by appeal from the presbytery to the sub-synod of Armagh; and this latter court having, at their October meeting in that year, sustained the objections raised against his ordination, until he should subscribe the confession in the usual form, Mr. Colville and his friends appealed to the next General Synod, where there was every probability of these objections being finally confirmed. Perceiving there was now no hope of his being ordained in Dromore, under the authority of the synod, without obeying the law, and fortified by private letters from his Irish non-subscribing friends, he took the extraordinary and unprecedented step of proceeding to London, unknown to his presbytery, to seek ordination from the hands of the English dissenters. These ministers were but too glad to have so favourable an opportunity of annoying and thwarting the subscribing party in Ulster, to make any objection to this irregular and unauthorised proposal. Accordingly, in the first week of December, about ten of them were got together in the vestry-room of Dr. Calamy's church, for they wished to avoid drawing the attention of their subscribing brethren in London to this strange spectacle by a public ordination service; and in this furtive manner they ordained young Colville, without subscription to any creed, to the ministerial office. The Rev. Dr. Oldfield, who had been the leader of the non-subscribers in the Salter's Hall debates, presided on the occasion; and the ministers signed a formal certificate, stating that they had "ordained him on the ground of recommendatory letters from sundry ministers in Dublin and the North of Ireland."

On his return, Mr. Colville applied to the presbytery of Armagh,

<sup>115</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 119.

at their first meeting, to receive him as an ordained minister, and both he and the people attached to him in Dromore petitioned the presbytery to install him in that congregation, now that all the difficulties in the way of ordination had, as they pleaded, been removed by his London trip. So far, however, from granting any such petition, they not only refused to acknowledge him in any way, but they immediately sent ministers to preach to that part of the congregation who adhered to the synod.<sup>116</sup> When his London ordainers heard of this reception which their favourite had met with, they were pleased to be very indignant; Dr. Calamy even threatened the Synod with the loss of the Royal Bounty, though it is difficult to conceive how they could have expected that their unauthorised interference with the discipline of the Irish Church would have been treated in any other way. This incident furnished a new subject of debate for the synod, whose annual meeting was now again approaching. Previous to its assembling, the non-subscribers, at least those of the metropolis, made another dishonourable effort to intimidate the synod from pursuing their course of policy towards that party, by holding over them the displeasure of the crown. In the beginning of June, the Dublin ministers, with Mr. Boyse at their head, put themselves in communication with Lord Carteret, the lord-lieutenant; and having represented to him the conduct of the synod in the light which they are well known to have viewed it, as unjust, unchristian, tyrannical, and so forth, they readily obtained from his Excellency a declaration, to the effect that the divisions among the northern Presbyterians were very displeasing to his majesty, and a recommendation that such courses should be dropped. This result of their interview with the lord-lieutenant Messrs. Weld and Boyse hastened to transmit to the synod, in a letter which was duly read to the assembled ministers, but which failed to effect any change in their policy.

The annual meeting of this year was again held at Dungannon in the middle of June. It does not appear to have excited the same interest throughout the Church as previous synods, for the attendance of ministers was less than it had been since the year

<sup>116</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 97.

1715, but that of the eldership, though above twenty less than the preceding year, was still rather above the average. Various topics connected with the state of the Church occupied the attention of this synod. One of the most prominent of these was the case of Mr. Colville, which came before the meeting by the appeal of himself and his adherents in Dromore against the refusal of the sub-synod of Armagh to proceed with his installation. Two courses were open to the synod—either to try this appeal, overlooking what had occurred since it had been taken in October last, or to proceed at once to inquire into the irregular conduct of Colville in seeking foreign ordination, without consulting his presbytery, and while this very question of his ordination, coupled with other charges against him, was still pending before the judicatories of the Church. Though, in opposition to the opinion of the non-subscribers, the synod very properly resolved to take cognisance of his recent conduct first, because he had thereby abandoned his appeal. Accordingly, having received a full narrative of what had occurred from the presbytery and sub-synod of Armagh, who had before them the formal certificate of his ordination in London, and having heard the statements of his own commissioners from Dromore, who acknowledged the fact (Mr. Colville himself, though in Dungannon, and duly cited, having declined to appear), the synod suspended him from the exercise of his ministry for three months, with power to the sub-synod of Armagh to terminate or to prolong this suspension as his conduct might deserve. The synod proceeded a step farther in the vindication of their discipline and authority. They resolved to inflict the penalty of suspension on any members of their body who should, in defiance of their sentence, hold ministerial communion with Colville during the period of his suspension. All these resolutions of synod the non-subscribers warmly opposed, defending their associate as far as they could venture to do, and entering protests at every stage of the proceedings.

At this synod the practice which had been introduced at the preceding one, of the subscribers and non-subscribers meeting separately during the adjournments, was resumed. The former body, anxiously considering in their separate meetings the dis-



tracted state of the Church, prepared a number of proposals or overtures for restoring the peace, securing the purity, and sustaining the authority of the Church, all of which had been so seriously impaired during the past year by the proceedings of the non-subscribers. Of these overtures, three were adopted by the present meetings. The first granted full liberty to those persons "who scrupled communion with ministers of non-subscribing or non-declaring principles to follow the light of their own consciences therein," notwithstanding the former charitable declarations and advices of the synod, which the non-subscribers had interpreted as absolutely prohibiting the people from acting on such scruples, and leaving their ministry to join that of subscribing pastors. The second contained another explanation of that well-intended but untoward act, which had proved one of the primary sources of all the past misunderstandings and embarrassments. It was now distinctly provided that the Pacific Act did not warrant the questioning of any *doctrines* contained in the Westminster Confession, but only of the *phrases* in which they were expressed; and it was enacted, that should any intrant object to subscribe his assent to any doctrine of the confession, the presbytery were to proceed no farther with his case till the General Synod should decide thereon; and that, in the meantime, his objections should be transmitted to the other presbyteries for their consideration until the meeting of synod, with penalties on those intrants, ministers or presbyteries, who contravened this act. By the the third overture, the synod sanctioned an arrangment, which, though not designed as such, was the first direct step to that formal separation which afterwards occurred. The congregations which composed the three presbyteries of Antrim, Belfast, and Down, forming the sub-synod of Belfast, were now distributed anew into five presbyteries, by dividing that of Down into those of Bangor and Killileagh, by constituting a new presbytery at Templepatrick, and by placing in the presbytery of Antrim all the non-subscribing ministers.<sup>117</sup> The

<sup>117</sup> The names of these ministers, twelve in number, will be found in note 34 of this chapter. At the same time, the synod gave permission to Mr. Orr of Comber, Mr. Elder of Aghadoey, and Mr. Patrick Simpson of Dun-

overture stated that this new arrangement was made in order "that such ministers and congregations may be presbyterially united as may carry on the affairs of this Church without debate or confusion to the glory of God and the good of souls; which expedient is to be continued till the God of peace shall mercifully remove the present misunderstandings."<sup>118</sup> At the same time, it was enacted, that "all these presbyteries were to be subject and accountable to superior judicatories, and to act agreeably to synodical rules, more especially in the admission of intrants." The consequence of this measure was immediate peace and quiet in all the presbyteries of this sub-synod. It also diminished very much the power and influence of the non-subscribing party, who, being perspicacious enough to perceive this result, opposed the adoption of this overture. For in the three presbyteries of which they previously formed a part, through their connections and their own personal influence, they possessed a decided preponderance; and by means of their able speeches on public occasions, when opposing their subscribing co-presbyters, they gained many adherents to their cause. But when collected together into one court, and having no opposition to encounter, they wielded only the power of a single presbytery, and attracted little notice. The more pressing emergencies of the year having been provided for by these acts,<sup>119</sup> both parties in the synod acknowledged that the future peace of the Church could only be secured by the adoption of some definite principles on which they could agree. With this view, the subscribing ministers submitted to the synod FIVE overtures, as "expedients for peace," which were ordered to be transmitted to presbyteries for their consideration until the next

dalk, to join this presbytery if they saw fit, all of whom subsequently became members of it. In the following year, the synod also erected a new presbytery at Dublin.

<sup>118</sup> To such an extent did the synod carry this accommodating principle, that they placed in the presbytery of Killileagh the moderate subscribers who were in favour of holding communion with the non-subscribers, and in that of Bangor those who were opposed to that practice. Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 115.

<sup>119</sup> They may be seen in Thompson's "Abstract," &c., pp. 31, 32.

meeting of synod. The non-subscribers, not having their "expedients" ready, promised to draw them up without loss of time, and transmit them in like manner to the several presbyteries.

Such were the principal proceedings of this synod in relation to the non-subscription controversy. They had satisfactorily vindicated the order and authority of the Church in Colville's case, though they strangely overlooked the insidious part acted by those members of their own body who, by their recommendatory letters to London, had conspired to defeat their common discipline. The sequel of this anomalous case may be related here. After the synod, Mr. Colville continued to preach in despite of its sentence; and in a little time he applied to the non-subscribing presbytery of Dublin, complaining of the injustice which had been done him, and praying them to install him in the charge of the congregation of Dromore. These ministers at once entertained the case, and having constituted themselves judges therein, they called upon the presbytery of Armagh to answer Mr. Colville's complaint. Though the presbytery, as a matter of course, declined to plead before this foreign tribunal, they furnished them with an account of Mr. Colville's conduct, and of several causes of offence which had been alleged against him, and which they were ready to investigate, according to the discipline of the synod. The Dublin presbytery next deputed three of their number, Messrs. Choppin of Dublin, M'Gachy of Athy, and Wood of Summerhill, to proceed to the North, under the pretext of accommodating matters between Colville and the synod, but in reality to take charge of the congregation, and install him as their minister. This deputation waited on the sub-synod of Armagh, at their meeting on the 19th of October, and endeavoured to persuade them to exercise the power committed to them by the General Synod, of removing from Colville the sentence of suspension. But so far from complying with such a request, they adopted the following resolution, and ordered it to be read in all the congregations within their bounds on the following Sabbath:—"Whereas Mr. Colville hath counteracted and contemned the sentence of suspension inflicted on him by the General Synod, and persists in his contumacy before us in

renouncing all subjection to our judicatories, and makes application to others to support him in his way, we hereby declare that he continues under the aforesaid sentence of suspension, and we therefore warn those of our persuasion not to own the said Mr. Colville in any of his ministrations, nor receive Gospel ordinances from him; and we appoint that any persons who shall aid him in his present course shall not be received into any congregation belonging to this synod, or be admitted to ordinances without certificates from the presbytery of Armagh; and if Mr. Colville persist in his contumacy, we appoint the presbytery of Armagh to proceed to further censure upon him as the rules of our discipline direct." On the following Lord's-day, the ministers from the South preached in Dromore, and on Tuesday they professed to inquire into Mr. Colville's case, in presence of the congregation, and afterwards to receive them under their care. On this occasion, no fewer than nine of the Ulster non-subscribing ministers met privately with these brethren at Dromore, but they took no part in what was going on, nor did they make their appearance at the installation, which was performed by the Dublin ministers alone on the following day, Wednesday, the 25th of October.<sup>120</sup> The adherents of the synod in Dromore soon after called a minister, who was ordained there in the month of May following.

This procedure of the Dublin non-subscribing ministers interrupted the harmony which had so long existed in that city between them and the subscribing ministers who were members of the northern synod. The venerable Mr. Iredell, having heard of their intention to intermeddle in Colville's case, fully warned them of the impropriety of their conduct. "I told them," he writes to a friend, "that they had nothing to do with the affair of Dromore, and as to them it was *coram non judice*; that they must not think the people of the North would count themselves obliged to answer at their bar—(this, I said, because as I apprehended their letter to the presbytery of Armagh was with an air of authority)—that they were going to complete the ruin of that

<sup>120</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 117.



poor conceited young fellow ; and that the North had never meddled in their affairs." Mr. Iredell adds—"Some of the best of the ministers here (I mean such as have no relation to the North) were not for going that length ; but they were outvoted by some brethren in from the country. A reverend minister observing I had withdrawn from their meetings on Mondays, spoke to me about it ; to whom I wrote that since the presbytery here had so far concerned themselves in the affair of Dromore in opposition to the synod whereof I was a member, and since with respect to them I was only in the nature of a correspondent, my present thoughts were that, to my grief, I was under a necessity of withdrawing from their presbyterial meetings till God is pleased to send better times."<sup>121</sup>

Meanwhile the press continued to send forth fresh contributions to the polemical warfare. In the month of September, Mr. Hemphill of Castleblayney, who had written the preface to Masterton's "Apology for the Northern Presbyterians," published a vindication of himself from some personal reflections in which Mr. Abernethy had indulged in his last pamphlet. This vindication he entitled—"The third page of Mr. Abernethy's Preface to the Defence of his Seasonable Advice considered."<sup>122</sup> It is altogether occupied with personal matters, and does not touch upon the general question in debate. But in the following month Mr. Masterton published an excellent discourse, on a topic which had been much misunderstood by the non-subscribers, and on which they had both spoken and written very inaccurately and unadvisedly. Its title was—"Christian Liberty founded on Gospel Truth, or the great Argument of Christian Liberty explained in its necessary connexion with sound principles, in opposition to some dangerous notions relating to both."<sup>123</sup> He exposes several of the unsound opinions vented by Mr. Abernethy in his well-known sermon on personal persuasion, and applies the subject directly to the controversy with the non-subscribers. It presents

<sup>121</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 121.

<sup>122</sup> Belfast, 1725, 8vo, pp. 16.

<sup>123</sup> Belfast, 1725, 8vo, pp. 46.

a favourable specimen of his talents for preaching, and is altogether a judicious and instructive discourse.

During the next six months the press was unemployed in this controversy. It was reawakened into activity by the OVERTURES which had been transmitted to the several presbyteries by the last meeting of synod. These overtures or proposed laws were five in number. The FIRST created an entirely new offence, never before set forth in the discipline of the Church, and attached a serious penalty to it; yet it is most vaguely and insufficiently described, and for that reason alone it was highly objectionable. It proposed to inflict the penalty of suspension on any minister or licentiate who should, in any unbecoming manner, reflect upon or reproach synods, or presbyteries, or their acts. The SECOND forbade any one to vote in ecclesiastical courts who maintained that Christ had not lodged any authority in the judicatories of the Church, but that they are merely consultative meetings, whose decisions, even in matters of prudence and expediency, may be counteracted or defeated by every man's private judgment. The THIRD proposed to censure any member who should refuse, as Mr. Nevin had done, to declare his sentiments on any doctrine of the confession, when required to do so by a judicatory who conceived that such a declaration would contribute to the glory of God and the edification of souls. The FOURTH requested the presbyteries to say, whether it should not be enacted that every minister and elder, before being admitted to vote in each annual synod, should subscribe or declare the Westminster Confession of Faith to be the confession of his faith. And the LAST proposed to inflict the penalty of suspension on the moderator and clerk of any inferior judicatory who should reverse or alter the decisions of the superior judicatory.<sup>124</sup>

Had these overtures been duly considered in the ensuing synod, it is difficult to say either how many of them would have been adopted, or, if adopted, in what form they would have appeared. As they stood when transmitted to presbyteries, they

<sup>124</sup> These five overtures may be seen in the "Narrative of Seven Synods," pp. 161-63.

were open to many and serious objections, which were not then discerned by their proposers, in their anxiety to obviate an imminent danger ; but that danger having been removed by the exclusion of the non-subscribers, these overtures were never submitted to the consideration of the synod, but were tacitly abandoned as no longer required. It is therefore unnecessary to discuss them here, or to point out wherein they were objectionable. It will be enough to notice the publications to which they gave rise. It is singular that not one of the non-subscribers wrote against them. Perhaps they had now made up their minds to secede at the ensuing synod ; and, as they would thus be beyond their reach if adopted, they deemed it needless to discuss them from the press. The only person who publicly opposed them was a subscribing minister, the Rev. Robert Higinbotham of Coleraine, who had not previously distinguished himself as a supporter of the non-subscribers. When the presbytery of Route were engaged in discussing these overtures, he had abstained from attending their meetings ; and though they specially postponed the question to another meeting on the 1st of March, to suit his convenience, he still absented himself, and never conferred with his brethren regarding them. They were therefore greatly surprised when, in the end of that month, he published his "Reasons against the Overtures which were referred to the consideration of the several presbyteries by the last General Synod, which met in Dungannon in June 1725. In a letter to a friend."<sup>125</sup> In this pamphlet he points out the objectionable nature of these proposed measures with considerable ability ; and though he does not formally disown subscribing principles, it is difficult to discern his adherence to them, especially when treating of the fourth overture. He indulges in several severe and unwarranted reflections on the conduct and writings of Mr. Masterton, and proves himself throughout to be a keen partisan of the non-subscribing faction. Its publication, therefore, excited much dissatisfaction, not only among his brethren in the

<sup>125</sup> Belfast, 1726, 8vo, pp. 52. It is dated from Coleraine, February 28, 1726.

presbytery, but among the members of his congregation in Coleraine, many of whom felt so aggrieved by this change of opinion on the part of their minister, that, not long after, nearly ninety families separated from him, and were erected into a new congregation in that town. Nor did his presbytery overlook this unexpected attack on the principles and policy of the synod. One of their number, the Rev. Mr. McBride of Ballymoney, at the request of his brethren, immediately engaged in preparing a reply, and, in the end of May, published it with this title—"The Overtures transmitted by the General Synod, 1725, set in a fair light, in answer to Mr. Higinbotham's late print, entituled, 'Reasons against the Overtures.'"<sup>126</sup> Though Mr. McBride was a leading minister on the subscribing side, this is the only production connected with this debate which appeared from his pen. And though it is in some respects acute and satisfactory, it cannot be said to exhibit either his temper or his talents as a controversialist in a favourable light. The presbytery of Route afterwards took judicial cognisance of several unguarded and dangerous positions in Mr. Higinbotham's pamphlet, which occupied their attention, and that of the superior courts, for several months.

The approach of the annual meeting of synod was principally discernible in the increased activity of the press. During the early part of the month of June, no fewer than four new publications made their appearance. The first of these was from the pen of Mr. Masterton. This able writer had declined to notice the animadversions which had been made on his "Apology for the Northern Presbyterians," by Mr. Abernethy, in his "Defence of the Seasonable Advice," but he now felt it his duty to reply

<sup>126</sup> The remainder of the title is as follows:—"Wherein a letter in MS., subscribed J. Boyse, copied and spread by Mr. Higinbotham, is also considered; the General Synod's principles and practice vindicated; Mr. Nevin's exclusion and Mr. Elder's suspension defended; and the non-confessing controversy laid open. The whole dedicated to the presbytery of Route. To which is added, a letter from a worthy minister in the same presbytery, known for modesty and moderation." Belfast, 1726, 4to, pp. 72 and 18. The minister referred to in the end of this prolix title is the Rev. Robert Haltridge, minister of Finvoy.



to the postscript which the three Dublin ministers had subjoined to Abernethy's "Defence."<sup>127</sup> In this "Short Reply," he took occasion to point out, with great clearness and force of reasoning, the impracticability of Christian communion being maintained, except among those who were agreed in acknowledging the same fundamental truths of the Gospel; and that, so long as the non-subscribers persisted in licensing and ordaining candidates who might hold the most conflicting interpretations of Scripture doctrines, it was impossible for subscribers to act in harmony with them in fulfilling the great purposes of a Christian Church—the defence and propagation of the truth. The next pamphlet that appeared was a letter from the Rev. Mr. Hemphill of Castleblayney, addressed to Mr. Haliday,<sup>128</sup> in which he very ably turns the objections of the latter to subscribing the Westminster Confession against his own theory of ministerial communion, and shows very clearly, that if these objections be valid against the subscribing, they are equally, if not more valid, against the non-subscribing scheme. These authors, Mr. Masterton and Mr. Hemphill, were the ablest writers on the side of subscription, and both of these pamphlets afforded most potent and seasonable support to that cause at this critical conjuncture. At the same time, the venerable Mr. Iredell of Dublin published "Remarks upon

<sup>127</sup> The title of Mr. Masterton's pamphlet will indicate its chief object. It was entitled, "A Short Reply to the Postscript to Mr. Abernethy's Defence of the Seasonable Advice, by the three reverend Dublin ministers: Wherein is considered what they offer against the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the use of it in reference to candidates for the holy ministry, as is practised in the North according to Synodical regulations. And likewise what they propose for having ministerial communion allowed among the northern Presbyterians without subscription to the said confession or declaration of assent to the doctrines of it, is showed to be inexpedient and of dangerous consequence." Dublin, 1726, 8vo, pp. 72.

<sup>128</sup> It is entitled, "A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Samuel Haliday, wherein his scheme of ministerial communion in the seventh page of his introduction to his 'Reasons against Subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith,' is examined and compared with his four grand arguments. Also a remark occasioned by an uncharitable reflection in the eleventh page of his late letter, directed to the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Kennedy." Dublin, 1726, 8vo, pp. 34. It is dated Castleblayney, May 30, 1726.

some Passages relating to the Westminster Confession of Faith, in the Rev. Mr. Samuel Haliday's Letter to the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Kennedy."<sup>129</sup> His object was to correct the mistakes of that writer with regard to the two natures of Christ being united in one person, "without composition," and he proves very clearly, not only that the doctrine of the Confession was in accordance with that of the Church of Christ in all ages, but that it was a truth of great importance in religion. These three pamphlets were on the subscribing side; the fourth was from an adherent of the opposite party. This was the celebrated controversialist and excellent minister, Mr. Boyse of Dublin, who now published a vindication of the private letter on which Mr. M'Bride had animadverted in his defence of the overtures, with a few remarks in a postscript on Mr. Masterton's recent pamphlet.<sup>130</sup> This was Mr. Boyse's last appearance from the press, after a long and honourable career as an author, and especially as a controversialist, on the most important points of doctrine and government; but this closing production of his pen is by no means equal to his other writings, while it is especially deficient in that temper and moderation which he had displayed on much more serious topics.

Amid the excitement produced by these controversial publications, the synod assembled in its usual place of meeting at Dunganon on the 21st of June. The attendance of ministers and elders was not larger than at the preceding meeting, though the improbability of the expected separation being deferred any longer must have been very apparent. The first subject of discussion was furnished by the "expedients for peace," which had been drawn out as promised by the non-subscribers, but copies of which had been sent to only a few presbyteries, owing to the great length of the paper, which, when afterwards printed, formed an octavo pamphlet of nearly fifty pages. These overtures or expedients were also five, but the first was the principal one, and formed, as they themselves state, "the foundation of all the rest."

<sup>129</sup> Dublin, 1726, 8vo, pp. 25.

<sup>130</sup> Belfast, 1726, 8vo, pp. 80. It is reprinted in his collected works, though by no means worthy of such a position. Mr. Boyse died November 22, 1728, in the sixty-eighth year of his age.

It embodied the points in dispute between them and the subscribers in six general propositions. In these they reiterate their well-known views on Christian and ministerial communion, as deduced from the sole headship of Christ in his Church, and on subscription, as opposed to religious liberty, and contrary to the Divine law. They also declare their opposition to all such compulsory declarations of faith as had been demanded from Mr. Nevin, and to all such voluntary subscriptions as had been sanctioned by the synod in 1721.

This elaborate manifesto of their principles was now formally laid before the synod by Mr. Kirkpatrick, who read it in open court on Wednesday afternoon. It was then agreed, in accordance with the precedent set at the two previous synods, that the subscribers should meet separately for the consideration of this paper, and that they should be allowed to Friday morning to frame their answer for the consideration of the synod. The purport of this answer could scarcely be doubted, after learning the uncompromising character of these expedients. Moderate men had hoped, that while the non-subscribers would still have objected to subscribe any invariable creed, and the Westminster Confession in particular, they would have specified in their expedients some leading truths of the Gospel, as a substitute for the latter, and would have joined in requiring all future candidates for the ministry to declare in their own words their assent to these truths—a proposal which would not have contradicted any principle they had hitherto professed to hold.<sup>131</sup> But no such expedient was now tendered. Not a single offer was made on which an agreement with the subscribers could be based. They

<sup>131</sup> For example, Mr. Haliday wrote, in 1724—"I never have pleaded that any man ought to be ordained who has not given to his ordainers sufficient proofs of his holding the faithful word taught by Christ and his apostles, and of his aptness to teach the doctrine of the Gospel. And I see no reason why it should be accounted impossible for a man to do this as well in his own words as by subscribing to a public, authorised, human form of confession." ("Reasons against Subscription," p. 138.) Similar admissions were made by Abernethy and Kirkpatrick; and had they been now offered, they might have afforded the basis of a union.

took up extreme ground, and thus left the synod no other alternative than to propose a separation, in the only form in which it could be proposed—namely, by exclusion; for they had uniformly declared that a voluntary separation from the synod would, on their part, be in the highest degree sinful. Accordingly the following overture was laid before the synod on Friday morning, and the non-subscribers were allowed to next morning to prepare their observations on it:—"The committee appointed by the subscribing body, having seriously considered the propositions offered by the non-subscribers, do observe that some of the principles contained in these propositions are evasive of the Pacific Act, several other important resolutions of the General Synod, and the known principles of our constitution, which we believe are founded upon and agreeable to the laws of the Gospel, as well as consonant to the principles and practices of other reformed Churches. We therefore justly reject these new terms of peace contained in their propositions (by which they endeavour to establish their non-declaring principles), as inconsistent with the peace and unity of this Church. And we do declare our steady adherence to our own principles, and that it is matter of the deepest concern to us that, by these their principles, and their declared resolution to adhere to them, they put it out of our power to maintain ministerial communion with them in Church judicatories as formerly, consistently with the faithful discharge of our ministerial office and the peace of our own consciences."<sup>132</sup> On Saturday morning, Mr. Kirkpatrick read the observations of his party on this overture. They complained that their "expedients" had been misunderstood, and that the condemnation of their principles contained in this overture was undeserved, and, at the same time, so indefinite, as to render it difficult for them to frame a distinct reply. They call upon the synod to answer their arguments before they proceed to a rupture, and conclude with pointing out the manifold evils which would result from such a step.

On these documents the last debate in this long-protracted

<sup>132</sup> "Narrative of Seven Synods," p. 228, 229. It is also given in "The Narrative Examined," p. 73.



controversy was founded. After much discussion, a motion was made by some of the moderate subscribers, who deprecated any breach of communion, that the further consideration of these papers should be delayed for another year; but this motion was negatived by a great majority. The same brethren made another proposal, that should the non-subscribers agree to absent themselves from the next synod, and, in the meantime, all debates and publications on controverted points be waived, the consideration of the overture might be indefinitely postponed. But the non-subscribers very properly declined to come under any such engagements, and, therefore, this puerile proposal fell to the ground. Mr. Abernethy, on behalf of his party, next offered, as a ground for deferring the debate, to leave this meeting, and to waive their privilege of attending the ensuing meeting of synod, on certain conditions; but these were of such a nature as to render the proposal unacceptable. At this point it will be most satisfactory to relate the close of this important debate in the words of the synod's minutes—"In the course of the debate the non-subscribers were desired, again and again, to let us know their principles or where we may find a scheme of them. To this they answered, they knew not our principles. To this it was replied that our principles are very well known, being contained in our confession of faith; and that we might go through our said confession, article by article, and declare our assent, and where they agree they might declare their assent too. But this they declined. After long reasoning, a question was offered—'Shall we agree to the above overture from the subscribing body or not?' Then another question was offered by others—'Whether the concessions offered by the non-subscribers of waiving their privilege of attending this synod from this time, and of attending the next General Synod, with the limitations mentioned, be a satisfactory ground to delay or not?' And then a debate arising, it was moved that the previous question shall be put; and the previous question being put, it carried that the first question shall be put. And then the first question—viz., 'Shall we agree to the overture from the subscribing body or not?' was put, and it carried AGREED by a great majority."

On the first motion, agreeing to put the question on the subscribers' overture in preference to Mr. Abernethy's proposal of delay, there was a majority of eleven ministers for the second question being put first; but the elders carried the motion in favour of the first question. The last and more important motion, approving of the overture, was carried by only thirty-six ministers against thirty-four who voted against it; while eight others declined voting, and two who were unable to attend joined in the protest against it, and thus, had they been present, the ministerial votes would have been equal.<sup>133</sup> The great body of the elders, however, supported the overture, and thereby rescued the Church from another mischievous compromise and another year's perplexing agitation. Thanks to the faithful and honest eldership of the Church! They had long seen both the folly of trying to unite these two discordant parties in harmonious action in the same synod, as well as the impropriety of a union, even were it practicable, with those who refused, on every occasion, to avow their doctrinal views. They had long deplored the unseemly divisions and debates by which the Church had been so grievously distracted. And now, when the opportunity was presented of terminating them, by the only course which was open to the synod, they heartily embraced it, unmoved by the apprehensions which induced so many ministers to waver and postpone the evil day; and fully satisfied that, as separation was the path of duty, so it would prove, as it did, the path of safety and of true peace.

Yet the separation, which was carried with so much difficulty, almost in spite of the ministers, was only of a limited nature. The non-subscribers were not excluded from Christian fellowship, nor their ministerial characters or position in any way interfered with. Neither were they excluded from ministerial communion in religious ordinances and sacraments. Their exclusion was merely from "ministerial communion with subscribers in church judicatories as formerly;" or, in other words, from ecclesiastical fellowship, by being members of the synod or its inferior courts. This separation, too, was not only limited

in its nature, it was also incomplete in its extent and operation. It did not remove from the synod all those ministers who had opposed and renounced her principles. The non-subscribers had many warm partisans who had secretly adopted their views, but who, not being honest enough to avow them, continued in the communion of the synod.<sup>134</sup> By acquiescing in her discipline, these "false brethren" disarmed the subscribing ministers of their fears; and while "men slept," they successfully disseminated their views in private, and, in the presbyteries in which they possessed influence, they gradually undermined the constitutional principles of the Church. By this means the seeds of error and discord were still retained, and these ultimately produced in the synod the most dangerous errors, as they did, also, though at an earlier period, in the separated presbytery, when left to act on its avowed scheme of Christian liberty and religious communion. The several Presbyterian Churches, both in England and Ireland, who now began to carry out their non-subscribing principles to their legitimate and oft-predicted results, in no long time became both anti-Presbyterian in government and heretical in doctrine. The instructive experiment which was now tried of a non-declaring Church ended in independency, real or virtual, and, what was much more deplorable, in Unitarianism. And just in proportion as certain presbyteries of the synod relapsed into non-subscription, the same doctrinal errors prevailed in them, until, at the distance of a century, this state of things led to another separation, which, as it proceeded on sounder principles than the one now related, may be expected to prove more effectual.

From that portion of her history which has been detailed in this chapter, let the Presbyterian Church in Ireland learn the important lesson of abiding faithfully by her confession of faith.

<sup>134</sup> Thus I find Mr. Masterton, in a letter to a friend in Scotland, written the week after the separation, admitting—"Indeed, the number of those in the synod who are for a strict adherence to our confession as a term of communion seems to be but small; and a vast number are so carried off that they could make greater concessions to the non-subscribers than some of us can with peace yield unto." Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxii., No. 75.

That confession may, indeed, be enlarged, or abridged, or varied, to suit abounding error; but let her ever “hold fast the faithful Word as she hath been taught,” in a definite and authorised confession, and let her suffer no latitudinarian pretexts of Christian liberty to absolve those who seek to exercise the ministry in her communion from declaring their concurrence in her recognised standards.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

A.D. 1726-36.

*The Non-Subscribers permitted to retain their share of the Royal Bounty—Address their congregations—Secessions from their congregations—Conduct of Mr. Higinbotham—Pamphlets relating to the separation—Narrative of the Seven Synods—Mr. Hutcheson's tract—Essay on Church Power—Reply to the Narrative of the Seven Synods—Passing of the Act of Toleration—Remaining grievances—Presbyterian marriages—Accession of George II., and proclamation of the new Sovereign—Favourable disposition of Government—Emigration to America, and its causes—Mission of Mr. Craghead to London, and its results—Renewed efforts for a Repeal of the Sacramental Test defeated—An Act passed to free Presbyterians from persecution in the celebration of marriage—A new rule made by the Synod relative to the election of ministers—Attempts to evade subscription to the Confession of Faith—Prospects of the Church.*

WHEN the separation of the non-subscribers had been effected, little remained for this synod to do. They received reasons of protest from those subscribing ministers who had opposed this separation, but they refused to receive a protest from the non-subscribers themselves, on the valid ground of their being no longer members of the court—the language of the minute is, “they being now excluded from membership.” And, lastly, at a meeting of the ministers in interloquitur, it was unanimously agreed that the usual proportions of the Royal Bounty should be paid to the members of the excluded presbytery as regularly as if they still formed a constituent part of the synod.

Before leaving Dungannon, the non-subscribers drew up an address to the congregations under their charge, which was immediately printed and widely circulated.<sup>1</sup> In it they give the

<sup>1</sup> It was entitled, “A Letter from the Presbytery of Antrim to the Congregations under their care, occasioned by the uncharitable breach of Synodical Communion made by the General Synod at Dungannon, June 25, 1726.” Belfast, 1726, 8vo, pp. 23.

six propositions on which their "expedients for peace" had been founded, together with a full narrative of the proceedings which terminated in their exclusion. At the same time, they carefully explain to their people that this exclusion was only from ministerial communion in Church judicatories, and they subjoin the substance of the protest presented to the synod by their subscribing friends and sympathisers. On their return home, every effort was made to secure the confidence and attachment of their congregations. In a letter from Belfast, written on Wednesday, the 6th of July, it is said—"This day Mr. Kirkpatrick and Mr. Haliday have convened the whole town, to relate to them the great injuries done to the non-subscribers, which causeth a dreadful ferment in the place; and great pains is taken to expose Mr. Masterton especially to the odium of their people."<sup>2</sup> Similar means were employed elsewhere; but notwithstanding these efforts, many now left the ministry of the non-subscribers. About ninety families separated from Mr. Abernethy, and nearly one hundred, residing in and about Portglenone, seceded from the ministry of Mr. Shaw of Ahoghill; and the synod's committee, assembled at Monaghan in October, erected them into congregations, annexing the one in Antrim to the presbytery of Templepatrick, and the other in Portglenone to the presbytery of Route. Some families also left the small congregation of Mr. Bruce, in Holywood, but it was some time before they were able to form a separate congregation. His income, however, was so far reduced by this secession, that the zealous and opulent non-subscribers of Belfast established an evening lecture, to be given every fortnight, in connection with Mr. Haliday's congregation, and appointed Mr. Bruce to it, with an annual salary of twenty pounds.<sup>3</sup> In Coleraine, the conduct and writings of Mr. Higin-

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxii., No. 75.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vol. xxii., No. 89. See also Wodrow's "Analecta," vol. iii. pp. 466, 467, from which it appears, on the authority of Mr. Stewart of Donald, that Mr. Bruce had given too good reason to conclude he was an Arian, and that in consequence his congregation had been reduced to a very few families, who were able to pay him not more than four pounds of yearly stipend. Wodrow subjoins this just reflection—"I was still afraid that the

botham caused great dissatisfaction. The presbytery of Route, in the first instance, commenced a process against him, on account of certain opinions contained in his late pamphlet against the overtures, for which he was censured by the synod's committee in October, when brought before them by appeal. At the same time, a number of families abandoned his ministry, and were erected into a new congregation in the town, at which he was so indignant, that he formally withdrew, together with his congregation, from the presbytery and synod, and joined the excluded non-subscribers. But he and they soon repented of this hasty step, and applied for readmission into communion, which was granted by the synod in the following year, on his declaring his adherence to subscription, and promising, for himself and his congregation, to live orderly and peaceably under its authority.

Though the controversy was now hushed for a season in the Church courts, it was continued for some time longer through the press. In the first place, the letter from the presbytery of Antrim to their congregations called forth an anonymous reply, entitled, "A Seasonable Warning offered by some Subscribing Ministers in the North to their Congregations, occasioned by the Misrepresentations in the Printed Letter of the Rev. Presbytery of Antrim," &c.,<sup>4</sup> in which they endeavoured to blunt the edge of that new attack on their principles. Next appeared one of the earliest opponents of the non-subscribers, the venerable Mr. Malcome of Dunmurry, now in the fortieth year of his ministry in that congregation. In the month of August, he published a pamphlet against them, with this title—"The Dangerous Principles of the Sectarians of the last age, revived again by our Modern New-Lights. In a letter to all lovers of peace and truth."<sup>5</sup>

looseness, in point of government and subscription, would land in looseness in doctrine; I am grieved to hear this beginning, and pray it may not spread among the rest of the non-subscribers." This prayer of the good man was not heard.

<sup>4</sup> I have never seen this pamphlet. There is a copy, in manuscript, in Wodrow's collections, in the Advocates' Library. Folio MSS., vol. xlix., No. 30, p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> Belfast, 1726, 12mo, pp. 15.

By the "sectarians of the last age," he meant the dissenting brethren and their adherents, who created so many debates on government and discipline in the Westminster Assembly, and who had effectually thwarted the setting up of Presbyterian government in England. He institutes a parallel between them and the modern non-subscribers in no fewer than twenty-one points of resemblance, some of them fanciful and unfounded, and all of them calculated to direct popular odium against the latter. So unjust and offensive was this attack felt to be, that Mr. Abernethy came forward, in the end of this year, to repel it, and published "A Letter to Mr. John Malcome, occasioned by his late pamphlet."<sup>6</sup> About the same time, there also appeared a "Letter" from Mr. Haliday to Mr. Iredell of Dublin, in reply to the "Remarks" of the latter on his "Letter to Mr. Kennedy," which called forth, in the beginning of the next year, a rejoinder from Mr. Iredell, in vindication of his original "Remarks."<sup>7</sup> In the month of March in this year, 1727, Mr. Elder of Aghadoey, after an interval of nearly a year, published a spirited vindication of himself from the harsh and uncalled-for animadversions which Mr. M'Bride of Ballymoney had made upon him in his pamphlet on the overtures. It was entitled, "A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Robert M'Bride, occasioned by his pretending to defend Mr. Elder's suspension, and by divers injurious reflections cast upon Mr. Elder in his late pamphlet."<sup>8</sup> In this publication he confines himself almost exclusively to an explanation of the circumstances con-

<sup>6</sup> Belfast, 1726, pp. 19. I have not been able to obtain a sight of this pamphlet so as to take any notice of it in the text. Together with several other tracts of Mr. Abernethy, it is not reprinted in the volume of his "Scarce and Valuable Tracts," published after his death in 1751.

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Haliday's pamphlet was entitled, "A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Francis Iredell, occasioned by his remarks on a letter to the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Kennedy." Belfast, 1726, 8vo, pp. 46. Mr. Iredell's rejoinder bore this title—"A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Samuel Haliday, wherein the remarks upon some passages in his letter to the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Kennedy are defended." Dublin, 1727, 8vo, pp. 34. I have never seen either of these pamphlets, but they were most probably confined to the theological question of the union of two natures in one person in the Saviour.

<sup>8</sup> Belfast, 1727, 8vo, pp. 44. It is dated from Aghadoey, Feb. 6, 1727.



nected with his suspension by the presbytery of Route in the year 1724. He complains, in no measured terms, of the injustice of that censure, and of the partiality with which he had been treated by the majority of the presbytery; and, in the absence of any reply from Mr. M'Bride, this defence must prepossess the reader in his favour. Mr. M'Bride's pamphlet drew down upon him another formidable attack, from the pen of Mr. Nevin of Downpatrick, whose exclusion from the synod he had also attempted to defend. But it was not until the middle of the following year that this answer appeared, under the title, "A Review of Mr. Nevin's Trial before the Synod in 1724, occasioned by Mr. M'Bride's few thoughts in Defence of the Synod contained in his pamphlet."<sup>9</sup> This is an unsparing exposure of his opponent, and an able vindication of his own principles and conduct in that untoward trial; but it is flippantly written, and several Scriptural texts are quoted, and applied in an offensive and irreverent manner. It was certainly unfortunate for Mr. M'Bride that his only publication in this controversy should have called forth against him no fewer than three assailants, Messrs. Boyse, Elder, and Nevin, and that he should not have ventured to reply to any one of their attacks.

The most important publication of this year was the account of the entire proceedings of the synod during the last six years, which the non-subscribers had promised to give to the world immediately after their exclusion. It did not make its appearance, however, until the month of August in this year, when it was published under the title of "A Narrative of the Proceedings of Seven General Synods of the Northern Presbyterians in Ireland, with relation to their differences in judgment and practice, from the year 1720 to the year 1726, in which they issued in a synodical breach."<sup>10</sup> This account is, as might be expected, partial

<sup>9</sup> Belfast, 1728, 8vo, pp. 96.

<sup>10</sup> The following is the remainder of this prolix title:—"Containing the occasion, rise, true state, and progress of the differences; expedients for peace offered by the non-subscribers and many other original papers; Synodical debates, overtures, and decisions; the conduct of the parties since the breach; with general observations upon the whole, and an appendix in

and one-sided, and contains an elaborate defence of all the peculiar views and principles of the non-subscribers. It is, however, a valuable compilation, both from the original documents it contains, as well as from the full reports of the debates in synod which it has preserved from oblivion. By the plausibility of its reasonings, its affectation of candour and moderation, and its misrepresentations of the subscribers' grounds of defence, it must have proved, in many quarters, a formidable attack on the principles of the synod. The subscribing ministers, therefore, from the time of its appearance, were anxious to provide an efficient antidote to its sophistries and misrepresentations. Their attention appears to have been at once directed to Mr. Hutcheson of Armagh, as one well fitted to undertake this task, although he had not yet published anything on this controversy. He had recently drawn up some remarks on the "Letter" of the presbytery of Antrim, which he had communicated to a few of his brethren; and these remarks were so satisfactory, that they entreated and persuaded him to review the "Narrative of the Seven Synods." He had proceeded some length in this work, when his illness, and finally his death, in February 1729, prevented its completion. This excellent minister was of so retired habits, and of so unobtrusive a disposition, that his friends could never induce him to consent to the publication of the valuable remarks he had prepared on the Antrim presbytery's letter. But after his death, although his executors also refused to commit them to the press, his friend, Mr. Lang of Loughbrickland, obtained the copy, and with some additional observations, and a few notes by himself and others, published it early in the year 1730.<sup>11</sup> This is by far the most satisfactory vindication of sub-

answer to a late pamphlet, entitled, 'A Seasonable Warning, offered by some Subscribing Ministers in the North to their Congregations,' &c. By the Ministers of the Presbytery of Antrim, in the North of Ireland." Belfast, 1727, 8vo, pp. xxiv. and 392.

<sup>11</sup> It bore this long title—"A Brief Review of a Paper, entitled, 'A Letter from the Presbytery of Antrim,' &c., with arguments for a proper authority and power of Government in the Church, and for submission to Sentences of Lawful Judicatures supposed to be passed *claw errante*. Also the right of

scription to a confession of faith, and of the authority of the Church, and the conduct of the synod, which appeared during this controversy. Though his remarks are comprised in a few pages, the author carefully analyses the six propositions on which the non-subscribers had latterly rested their case, and he shows their contrariety to Scripture, and to one another. He refutes their plausible sophisms with great clearness and skill, and writes with exemplary temper and moderation. His style is correct and perspicuous, and, in this respect also, he fully equals the most practised of his opponents. It is, indeed, much to be regretted, that the controversy with the non-subscribers had not, at the very commencement, fallen into the hands of this able and pleasing writer. No reply was offered to this seasonable vindication of subscription, and of the proceedings of the synod; but the defence of Church power, contained in this pamphlet, called forth an answer in the following year, "in the name of some non-subscribing ministers in the North of Ireland," but written almost entirely by Mr. Kirkpatrick of Belfast.<sup>12</sup> With the exception of the preface, it was confined to the discussion of the difficult question of the nature and extent of the authority possessed by the Church; which, like the analogous question of civil authority, cannot be correctly stated in general propositions, or its limits accurately determined by mere abstract reasoning. This branch of the controversy was, therefore, far from leading to any satisfactory results.

As yet, the most formidable attack of the non-subscribers, contained in their "Narrative of the Seven Synods," had remained unanswered. Three years had elapsed since it was published, and still no reply appeared. This delay was principally owing

Churches to require Subscription of such as they admit into the Ministry, is maintained; and the practice of the Presbyterians in the North of Ireland, in relation to Subscription, is defended. By some Subscribing Ministers." Dublin, 1730, 8vo, pp. 59.

<sup>12</sup> It was entitled, "An Essay upon the important question—Whether there be a legislative, proper authority in the Church, and whether Christian discipline, truth, peace, and good order may not be maintained without it? With a refutation of some principles advanced in a late pamphlet, entitled, 'A Brief Review of a Paper,'" &c. Belfast, 1731, 8vo, pp. 100.

to the general belief that Mr. Hutcheson was engaged in preparing an answer to it. So long as he lived, therefore, no one thought of undertaking that task. But after his death, and the publication of his pamphlet in answer to the presbytery of Antrim's letter, the leading ministers of the synod induced one of their brethren to take up the pen; and, in the end of the year 1731, he published the long-expected reply.<sup>13</sup> This is a valuable pamphlet, though it is scarcely so full an examination, or so careful a refutation, of the non-subscribers' book as the occasion demanded. Professing to be a reply to a volume of four hundred pages, it ought to have been rather ampler and more elaborate. But it is conclusive and satisfactory so far as it goes, and sets in their true light many transactions which had been unconsciously distorted by the partiality of the non-subscribers. It may be said to be the closing pamphlet in this controversy,<sup>14</sup> which had ex-

<sup>13</sup> It was entitled, "The Narrative of the Non-Subscribers Examined. Wherein the differences among Protestant Dissenters in the North of Ireland, in their rise, progress, and issue, are fairly represented; the Mistakes of the Non-Subscribers detected; the main Arguments and Objections answered; and the Acts and Resolutions of the General Synod vindicated. Together with some original papers, extracts from our records, their own pamphlets, and some private letters never before published. By a Member of the General Synod." Dublin, 1731, 8vo, pp. 91. I have not been able to ascertain the name of the author.

<sup>14</sup> The Rev. James Duchal, who, in August 1730, had succeeded Mr. Abernethy in the non-subscribing congregation of Antrim, partially renewed the controversy, by publishing anonymously, "A Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend, a Subscribing Minister in the North of Ireland," Dublin, 1731, pp. 16, in which, under the affectation of great impartiality, he restated the peculiar principles of his party on Christian communion and subscription. This called forth the Rev. William Holmes, minister of the newly-formed congregation in the same town, who wrote "Plain Reasons against joining with the Non-Subscribers in their unlimited scheme of religious communion," Dublin, 1732, 8vo, pp. 28—a very clear and able defence of subscribing principles. Mr. Duchal published his rejoinder, which he acknowledged to be his, "Remarks upon a late Paper, entitled, 'Plain Reasons,' &c., by a Friend of Liberty and Truth," Belfast, 1732, 8vo, pp. 35, to which Mr. Holmes replied in a pamphlet, with this title, "Impartial Reflections upon Mr. Duchal's Remarks," &c. Belfast, 1732, 8vo, pp. 32. And this local controversy was closed by a tract from the pen of one "Mr. H. B. [*i.e.*,



tended over a dozen years, and had called forth above fifty publications, not one of which has survived the occasion that gave them birth. The only exception is a small work on the Trinity, which Mr. Masterton of Belfast published in November 1728, and which passed through four editions in a few years, and has been since frequently reprinted both in England and Scotland.<sup>15</sup>

Having traced the progress and issue of this unhappy controversy *within* the Church, we may now advert to what befell her from *without*, while engaged in this polemical strife. Strange that the very year which witnessed its outbreak should also have been the one that saw her government and worship legalised by the Act of Toleration. That tardy act of justice left unredressed a number of grievances which still pressed upon her ministers and people, while attempts were made in some parts of the province to deprive them of the benefits of even this statute. Thus, Episcopalian landlords, possessing large estates, refused to permit Presbyterian churches to be built on their properties; and, following the example of some of the bishops, they inserted in their leases clauses to that effect. By others, higher rents were exacted from their Presbyterian than their Episcopalian tenantry, and this difference was abated the moment the former class conformed. The Sacramental Test still excluded Presbyterians from all places of public trust under the crown. Though constituting, in several counties of Ulster, more than two-thirds of the Protestant population, they could not have a single gentleman of their Church in the office of magistrate or sheriff; and, in some places,

Hugh Blair] of Belfast, layman," entitled, "A Letter to the Rev. William Holmes of Antrim, concerning his impartial reflections upon Mr. Duchal's Remarks," &c. Belfast, 1732, 8vo, pp. 16.

<sup>15</sup> The following is the title of the original edition:—"The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity Explained and Asserted from the Holy Scriptures. Being a Vindication of what is contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and other Protestant Confessions upon that subject," &c. Belfast [1728], 12mo, pp. 65. The fourth edition, "with a commendatory preface and Greek notes by A. Taylor," was published at London in 1734, and reprinted in Belfast in 1745. It was also printed in Edinburgh so early as 1729; and it appeared in London, in the same volume with Jones's well-known work on the same subject, in 1827.

Presbyterian teachers could with difficulty keep open their schools. And, lastly, they were still subject to frequent prosecutions and to expensive litigation in the ecclesiastical courts for their marriages celebrated by their own clergy. From this last grievance several efforts were made by their friends in parliament to procure for them relief. In particular, Colonel Upton, in the session of parliament in the latter part of the year 1723, had succeeded in introducing into a general bill for continuing and amending certain temporary statutes then near expiring, an important clause, which would have put an end to these vexatious prosecutions. In this form the bill had passed the commons in the middle of November, but its subsequent fate will be best related in the words of Colonel Upton's minister, writing to a friend in Scotland in April 1724:<sup>16</sup>—"The bill relating to our marriages was very good as it passed the House of Commons; and though it would not have rendered our marriages strictly legal, yet it would have perfectly saved our people from prosecution in the official courts. But when it came before our council for their approbation, [before its transmission to England], the Archbishop of Tuam, though he had before approved of it in private and appeared as a friend, now turned our enemy; and found interest in the council, first, to separate it from the two other important bills to which the House of Commons had tacked it, and then to form it in such a manner as any two persons might have married themselves legally before any two witnesses to prove the marriage. And so in this ridiculous form it went to England, and was sent back with the approbation of the English council. When it came again before the House of Commons [on the 28th of January, under the title of 'An act for the further amendment of the law,'] they being generally our friends in that point, resented bitterly the proceeding of our council with a liberty of speech more than hath been usual; and his good lordship, the archbishop, both within and without doors met with severe treatment in his character by most of the leading members. However, such as the bill was, some of our friends were for passing it, in hopes of getting it amended

<sup>16</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxi., No. 86.

in another session. But others could not in conscience vote for it; and so it was cast out by the majority.<sup>17</sup> Thus the affair of our marriages stands as it did; but we have some promises from persons at the helm, both in State and Church, that there shall be no prosecutions till the next session of parliament. The prerogative court seems to be pretty well disposed; but the underling officials are mere vipers, and will not cease to plague us if they can." The effort to relieve the Presbyterians from these prosecutions was not renewed for several years. But, on the other hand, an attempt was made by the High Church party, in the end of the year 1725, to invalidate dissenting marriages, in a bill which they carried through the House of Commons "for preventing marriages by degraded clergymen and Popish priests." Happily, however, the government interfered, by suppressing the obnoxious part of this measure;<sup>18</sup> so that, at the close of this reign, the question of Presbyterian marriages was left in the same uncertain and annoying state.

The ministers were assembled in their annual meeting of synod at Dungannon, when news arrived of the death of George I., and the accession of his son, George II., on the 11th of June 1727. So slow was the transmission of news in those days, that even important intelligence such as this did not reach Dungannon till Thursday, the 22d of that month. The Right Honourable Thomas Knox, the proprietor of the town, and one of the members for the borough in the Irish parliament, immediately sent a message to the synod, inviting them to be present at the proclamation of the new sovereign. Accordingly, both ministers and elders, with the moderator at their head, "gave attendance in a body, and put all due respect on the solemnity;" and, before the synod separated, they drew up a loyal and dutiful address to his majesty, and forwarded it through the usual channel.<sup>19</sup> At the

<sup>17</sup> On the 3d of February 1724, by a majority of 89 to 76. "Journals of the Irish Commons," vol. v. p. 208.

<sup>18</sup> Another attempt was made against Presbyterian marriages in the session of 1727-28, by a bill to explain and amend this act of 1725; but though it passed the commons, and was ordered to be sent to England, the government declined to support it.

<sup>19</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxii., No. 90.

commencement of this reign, the highest authorities in the Irish Church and State were generally favourable to the Presbyterians. The primacy was held by Dr. Hugh Boulter, a native of England. He was a man of moderate principles, a friend to toleration, and disposed to relieve Presbyterian grievances, save those arising out of tithes and church dues. Lord Carteret, the lord-lieutenant, was seldom in Ireland, except during the sitting of parliament; but among the lords-justices, who conducted the government in his absence, were always to be found the primate, and, so long as he lived, Mr. Conolly, the speaker of the House of Commons, and the tried friend of the Presbyterians. But though they had nothing to complain of, so far as related to the government, yet they had become more and more dissatisfied with their position and prospects in Ulster. The prosperity of the rural portion of them now began to decline. After the Revolution, the landed proprietors, anxious to induce persons to occupy their waste lands, had granted very favourable leases, under which the Presbyterian tenantry had been stimulated to improve their holdings and extend their cultivation. But as these leases, usually for thirty-one years, expired, the gentry raised their rents to such an amount, that the farmers were exceedingly discouraged, and began to think of relinquishing their farms, and of either returning to Scotland or emigrating to America. The rise of their rents brought along with it also a still more galling discouragement. It was almost invariably accompanied with a proportionate increase of the tithe, which was felt to be much more burdensome than the rent, being paid to a clergy from whom they derived no spiritual benefit, and who were often bitterly opposed to their civil and religious liberties. To add to their discouragements, the three successive harvests after that of 1724 had proved most unfavourable; so that, in the year 1728, the price of food far exceeded what it had been in the memory of that generation.<sup>20</sup> And when to these embarrassments in their worldly circumstances were added the disqualifi-

<sup>20</sup> Wodrow, writing in January, 1729, complains very much of the high price of provisions, and the consequent stagnation of trade in Scotland. "Analecta," vol. iv. p. 26.



cations for office created by the Sacramental Test, and the other civil disabilities under which they were lying, it is not surprising that the Irish Presbyterians would be very generally looking to America, as not only affording a more promising investment for labour and capital than could be now obtained in Ireland, but as a part of the empire where religious grievances were almost unknown. This tendency to seek refuge in the new world from the social evils of the old had, indeed, displayed itself several years previously. In the spring of the year 1718, a minister in Ulster writes to a friend in Scotland—"There is like to be a great desolation in the northern parts of this kingdom by the removal of several of our brethren to the American plantations. No less than six ministers have demitted their congregations, and great numbers of their people go with them; so that we are daily alarmed with both ministers and people going off."<sup>21</sup> The passing of the Toleration Act in the following year, and the hopes which were then entertained of further relief, seem to have checked this emigrating spirit for a season; and though there are traces of its revival about the year 1724, it did not attract the attention of government till a few years afterwards. In the latter part of the year 1728, Archbishop Boulter, then one of the lords-justices, transmitted to the secretary of state in England the following "melancholy account," as he calls it, of the state of the North, and of the extensive emigration which was taking place to America:—"We have had for several years some agents from the colonies in America, and several masters of ships, that have gone about the country and deluded the people with stories of great plenty and estates to be had for going for, in those parts of the world; and they have been the better able to seduce people by reason of the necessities of the poor of late. The people that go from hence make great complaints of the oppressions they suffer here, not from the government, but from their fellow-subjects of one kind or another; as well as the dearness of provisions; and say these oppressions are one reason of their going. But whatever occasions their going, it is certain that above 4200 men, women, and children,

<sup>21</sup> Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xx., No. 129.

have been shipped off from hence for the West Indies within three years; and of these above 3100 this last summer. Of these possibly one in ten may be a man of substance, and may do well enough abroad, but the case of the rest is deplorable. They either hire themselves to those of substance for their passage, or contract with the masters of ships for four years' servitude when they come thither. Or if they make a shift to pay for their passage, they will be under a necessity of selling themselves for servants for four years, for their subsistence when they come there. The whole North is in a ferment at present, and people every day engaging one another to go next year to the West Indies. The humour has spread like a contagious distemper, and the people will hardly hear anybody that tries to cure them of their madness. The worst is, that it affects only Protestants, and reigns chiefly in the North, which is the seat of our linen manufacture."<sup>22</sup>

Alarmed by this extensive emigration from Ulster, one of the lords-justices, desirous of ascertaining its causes, consulted Mr. Iredell and Mr. Craghead of Dublin on the subject. At his Excellency's request, the former wrote to all the northern presbyteries, urging them to send him their views on this subject. The answer of one of the presbyteries, written in December, has been preserved.<sup>23</sup> They specify the discouragements under which they lay by the Sacramental Test excluding them from all places of public trust and honour, as among the chief causes of driving them to other parts of the empire where no such discouragements existed. But they also subjoin—"The bad seasons for three years past, together with the high price of lands and tythes, have all contributed to the general run to America, and to the ruin

<sup>22</sup> Boulter's "Letters," Oxford edition, vol. i. pp. 260, 261. Writing in March 1729, he communicates this additional information:—"The humour of going to America still continues, and the scarcity of provisions certainly makes many quit us. There are now seven ships at Belfast that are carrying off about 1000 passengers thither." *Ibid.* p. 288. See also No. V. of the "Reasons for the Repeal of the Sacramental Test," p. 68, note.

<sup>23</sup> Among the Wodrow MSS. in the Advocates' Library. It is from the presbytery of Tyrone. See also Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxii., No. 108.

of many families, who are daily leaving their houses and lands desolate. This," they conclude by saying, "may be looked on by some as country clamour and noise. But the many waste lands, the starving condition of multitudes, the flight of others from hardships felt and feared, will soon be found powerful enough arguments against their unbelief." The Dublin ministers embodied the result of these inquiries into Presbyterian grievances in a memorial, which they laid before the lords-justices in the beginning of March 1729. In this memorial they specified the extraordinary rise in their tithes, and the oppressions of the ecclesiastical courts in their recovery, as not the least among their grievances. But the archbishop, true to his order, in transmitting this memorial to the lord-lieutenant, then in England, warmly opposed this representation; and, at the same time, he wrote at great length to the Bishop of London, to assure him that the oppressed state of the northern Presbyterians was owing entirely to the landlords, who had latterly set their lands so high as to disable their tenantry from paying the rise in tithes, which was certain to follow the rise in rents.<sup>24</sup>

The ministers followed up this statement of their grievances by commissioning Mr. Craghead to proceed to London, for the twofold purpose of urging their removal, and of settling some matters connected with the English or additional Royal Bounty. This grant had been hitherto received by a Mr. Hamilton, a merchant in London, in his own name, who transmitted it to the Irish Presbyterians both of North and South. But this gentleman, having recently become a member of the English House of Commons, wished his name to appear no longer as the receiver of such a grant, and it therefore became necessary to provide a new agent.<sup>25</sup> There were also some years of this grant remain-

<sup>24</sup> Boulter's "Letters," vol. i. pp. 289-295. But a committee of the House of Commons, in March 1736, corroborated this Presbyterian memorial, when they reported to the house, "That a strong inclination has prevailed for some time among the Protestants of this kingdom to withdraw themselves and their effects to America. And that this temper of mind is greatly increased by the new and burdensome demand made by the clergy," of the title of agistment. "Journals of the Irish Commons," vol. vi. p. 661.

<sup>25</sup> Wodrow, in his "Analecta," vol. iv. p. 57, speaks as if this gentleman

ing unpaid, prior to the accession of George II., and Mr. Craghead was empowered to obtain, if possible, the payment of these arrears.<sup>26</sup> On this occasion Primate Boulter favoured Mr. Craghead with a letter of introduction to the prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, the following extract from which is so honourable to the archbishop's character for candour and impartiality, and is so illustrative of the distressed state of the ministers at this conjuncture, that it merits insertion in these pages:<sup>27</sup>—"The dissenting ministers of this place having applied to me to recommend their case and that of their brethren to your kind patronage, I have made bold to trouble you with this letter by Mr. Craghead, one of their number, and their solicitor on this occasion. They inform me that his late majesty was graciously pleased to give out of his privy purse, to the ministers of the North, £400 per annum, and the like sum to those of the South, and that his present majesty has graciously continued this allowance to them; that by his late majesty's death they apprehend they lost two years of what they hoped to have otherwise received. They are sensible there is nothing due to them, nor do they make any such claim; but as the calamities of this kingdom are at present very great, and by the desertion of many of their people to America, and the poverty of the greatest part of the rest, their contributions, particularly in the North, are very much fallen off, it would be a great instance of his majesty's goodness if he would consider their present distress. Sir, it is certain they are under very great difficulties at present on the accounts they mention; and I am assured, from good hands, that several of them who have had £50 per annum from their flock, do not receive £15.<sup>28</sup> It is but doing them justice to affirm that they are

had received the *Irish* Royal Bounty of £1200 a year. But this is a mistake; it was the *English* grant of £800 a year which stood in his name in the accounts of the English treasury.

<sup>26</sup> See note 77, chap. xxv.

<sup>27</sup> Boulter's "Letters," vol. i. pp. 295, 296. The archbishop's letter is dated from Dublin, March 31, 1729.

<sup>28</sup> I find the archbishop's statement corroborated in a letter from Mr. Livingston, the minister of Templepatrick, situated in the best part of the county of Antrim, who, writing just two days before the archbishop, to a



very well affected to his majesty and his royal family; and by the best inquiries I could make, do their endeavours to keep their congregations from deserting the country; not more than one or two of the younger ministers having any ways encouraged the humour now prevailing here."

When the synod met in June of this year, Mr. Craghead, by letter, reported favourably of his negotiations in London. The arrears appear to have been allowed; and from this date the English Royal Bounty was regularly paid, although the Irish grant frequently fell into arrear.<sup>29</sup> But though Mr. Craghead had succeeded in one part of his mission to London, he failed in inducing the government to attempt the removal of the civil grievances still pressing on the Presbyterians. Two years having elapsed, and another session of parliament, held in 1730, having closed without anything being done for their relief, they resolved to make a vigorous effort in their own behalf. With this view, the synod, in 1731, again commissioned Mr. Craghead to proceed to London, to urge upon the English government a repeal of the Sacramental Test. It was so far favourable to his mission, that,

friend in Scotland, says—"Such a dearth and scarcity of victuals was never heard of in these parts. Almost the whole product of the last harvest is already spent. There is not seed enough to sow the ground, and little money to buy what is brought by sea from foreign parts: which, with the oppressive and exorbitant rents and tythes from the landlords and established clergy, is driving the inhabitants out of the country to America. This people [of Templepatrick] are now indebted to me in four years' full stipend; and I have not received above £12 since January was a twelvemonth." (Wodrow's MS. Letters, vol. xxii., No. 109.) This, I regret to say, must be my last reference to this valuable collection of "Letters," which, from the year 1703 to this date—an interval of a quarter of a century—have furnished me with so much information, hitherto unknown, on the ecclesiastical affairs of Ulster. This letter of Mr. Livingston is the last in the series of Irish letters preserved by Wodrow, and now deposited in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh. They amount to 225, of which eight only have been printed among "The Wodrow Correspondence."

<sup>29</sup> Thus I find, from the accounts presented to parliament, that, in 1731, half a year of the *Irish* Royal Bounty had been for some time unpaid, which, in 1735, had increased to three quarters; this sum was still due and unpaid in 1737.

in the previous year, Lord Carteret, who had latterly become so much of a High-Churchman as to be adverse to their claims, had ceased to be lord-lieutenant, and had been succeeded by a more tolerant nobleman, the Duke of Dorset, then in London, but just on the eve of coming over to Ireland to hold a meeting of parliament. Mr. Craghead met with a favourable reception from the English ministry; and the friends of the dissenters in the government made an effort to have the repeal of the Test Act inserted among the instructions drawn up for the new lord-lieutenant. It was generally believed that this object had been gained; and that, when the Duke came over in September of this year, he was fully empowered to use his influence to obtain that repeal. Accordingly, when the Presbyterian ministers waited on his grace, after his arrival, they were full of hope that he would hold out some encouragement to this effect. But they were put off with the usual unmeaning compliments; and, when they waited on their friend, Archbishop Boulter, he "told them that he believed they were disappointed, and so was he himself; that he had seen the lord-lieutenant's instructions, that he was only empowered to take off the Test, after the king's business was over in parliament, and that its repeal, under such circumstances, appeared to be a perfect uncertainty to him and them."<sup>30</sup>

Still, although nothing was done for the relief of the Presbyterians at the commencement of this session of parliament, strong hopes were entertained of a favourable result at no distant period. To pave the way for such relief, Mr. Abernethy, who had succeeded Mr. Boyse in the congregation of Strand Street, in Dublin, published anonymously, while parliament was sitting, a political pamphlet, entitled, "The Nature and Consequences of the Sacramental Test considered, with Reasons humbly offered for the Repeal of it."<sup>31</sup> This is an exceedingly clear and cogent statement of the injustice done to the Presbyterian population of Ireland by that obnoxious act, and of their strong claims to have it repealed. But Mr. Abernethy wrote and reasoned in vain.

<sup>30</sup> Wodrow's "Analecta," vol. iv. p. 298, 299.

<sup>31</sup> Dublin, 1731, 8vo. pp. 63; republished in his "Scarce and Valuable Tracts."

All the former enemies of toleration immediately bestirred themselves to defeat the wished-for repeal. Dean Swift, the earliest and bitterest opponent of the dissenters, resumed his formidable pen, which had just set the kingdom in a blaze by his unscrupulous assault on Wood's halfpence, and used every art to rouse the Established Church and the aristocracy to oppose their claims. During this session of parliament, he published "The Presbyterians' Plea of Merit, in order to take off the Test, impartially examined." And, in the appendix, he reprinted the greater part of Tisdall's preface to his "Case of the Sacramental Test," with a few concluding observations on Abernethy's pamphlet, which had just appeared.<sup>32</sup> He followed up this vindictive attack by publishing, early in the following year, 1732, an ironical piece, entitled, "The Advantages proposed by Repealing the Sacramental Test impartially considered,"<sup>33</sup> to which he added a fuller and more elaborate reply to Abernethy's tract than he had given in his former pamphlet. Several other pieces on this subject, mostly anonymous, appeared during the course of this year; but the chief seat of the controversy was now transferred from Ireland to England. In 1732, the English Protestant dissenters made a vigorous effort to procure, from the Whig government of Sir Robert Walpole, the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. A host of pamphlets issued from the London press; and meetings were held throughout England to organise their plans, and to bring their influence, now considerable on the eve of a general election, to bear on their representatives in parliament and on the ministry. But the latter deemed this an unsuitable time for proposing such a measure; and they fully realised the ironical title of one of the anti-dissenting pamphlets, which was in these words—"The Dispute Adjusted about the proper time of Repealing the Test Act, by shewing that no time is proper." The dexterous intrigues by which the wary prime minister succeeded

<sup>32</sup> This preface by Tisdall had been recently republished in a Dublin periodical, called "The Correspondent," whence it had been taken by Swift, or his publisher, and appended to this pamphlet. See note 11, chap xxiv.

<sup>33</sup> Dublin, 1732, 8vo, pp. 32. Reprinted in London the same year. The reply to Abernethy occupies two-thirds of the pamphlet.

in postponing this embarrassing question have only been recently communicated to the public, but it is unnecessary to advert to them here.<sup>34</sup> Suffice it to say, that the English dissenters, or at least a majority of them, were persuaded that it would be most advisable not to press their claims at this conjuncture, but to postpone their consideration to that "more convenient season," which in this, as in most other cases, so seldom arrives.

Almost a similar result attended the efforts of the Irish Presbyterians to procure a repeal of their Test Act in the following year. So obvious was the justice of their claims, and the policy of conceding them to so large a body of the Protestants of Ireland, that the English ministry had at length committed full powers for carrying a repeal of the Sacramental Test to the Duke of Dorset, on his return to Ireland, in September 1733, to hold a meeting of parliament. On the 4th of October, he opened the session by a speech from the throne, in which he hinted at the projected repeal, by reminding both houses of the civil and religious rights secured to them by his majesty, and assuring them that "an inviolable attachment to his royal person and family, and a firm union amongst all Protestants, who have one common interest and the same common enemy, will be the surest means (under God) of securing these blessings to our latest posterity." But neither house responded to this significant allusion, and it soon became but too evident that the attempt to carry the repeal of that act would be unsuccessful. The proceedings on this occasion, when the hopes of the Presbyterians were once more signally disappointed, will be best related in the words of Archbishop Boulter, in the following extract from his letter to the Duke of Newcastle, dated from Dublin on the 18th of December:<sup>35</sup>—"As an affair of great consequence is just over with us, I mean the push for repealing the test in favour of the dissenters, I thought it my duty to acquaint your grace how that affair stands. When my lord-lieutenant first came hither this time, he let the dissenters and others know that he had instructions, if it could be done,

<sup>34</sup> They may be seen in "Lord Hervey's Memoirs of the Reign of George the Second," London, 1848, vol. i. chapter vii.

<sup>35</sup> Boulter's "Letters," &c., vol. ii. p. 108-112.



to get the Test repealed; and he has since spoken to all any ways dependent on the government, as well as to others whom he could hope to influence, to dispose them to concur with the design; and so have others done that have the honour to be in his majesty's service. But it was unanimously agreed that it was not proper to bring that affair into either house of parliament till the supply was secured. However, as the design could not be kept secret, and as the dissenters sent up agents from the North to solicit the affair among the members of parliament, it soon occasioned a great ferment both in the two houses and out of them, and brought a greater number of members to town than is usual. There came likewise many of the clergy from the several parts of the kingdom to oppose the design, and a pamphlet war was carried on for and against repealing the Test, in which those who wrote for it showed the greatest temper.<sup>36</sup> And thus the persons who came to town to oppose it by degrees heated one another and visibly gained ground; and the members of the House of Commons were by adjourned calls of the house kept in town. There were daily reports spread that the bill would be brought in such or such a day; and some in the opposition gave out they would move for it, that the point might be decided one way or another. Till at length, after much impatience shown on the occasion, on this day se'nnight a very unusual, and, I think, unparliamentary motion was made, that, after the next Friday, the house would neither receive bills, nor heads of bills, for repealing any part of the acts to prevent the growth of Popery, in one of which the Sacramental Test is enacted.<sup>37</sup> There was some oppo-

<sup>36</sup> The curious reader will see, in Mason's "History of St. Patrick's Cathedral," pp. 387, 388, the names of various pamphlets which appeared on this occasion; but the list might be extended much farther. I possess at least half a dozen others, all anonymous. Among these the most important were five numbers of a paper, entitled, "Reasons for the Repeal of the Sacramental Test," which appeared weekly at this particular crisis. They were the joint production of Mr. Abernethy and of Mr. William Bruce, a bookseller in Dublin, youngest son of the Rev. James Bruce, minister of Killileagh, in the county of Down, from 1685 to 1730.

<sup>37</sup> This resolution of the commons, on Tuesday, the 11th of December, stands thus on their "Journals:"—"Resolved, that no bill or heads of a

sition made to the shortness of the time and the next Monday moved for; but the warmth of the house, which was a very full one, against any further delay, and indeed against any repeal of the Test, appeared so great and so general, that it was thought most prudent not to divide about that resolution. And upon considering what then appeared to be the sense of much the greater part of the house, and what was found to be the disposition of the members by talking with them, it was concluded at a meeting at the castle on Wednesday morning and another on Thursday morning, where some of the agents for the dissenters were present, to be most for the credit of the government and the peace of the kingdom, not to push for a thing which plainly appeared impracticable. And at a meeting of several members of the House of Commons who were disposed to repeal the Test, it was agreed that in the present state of affairs it would be wrong to push for a thing that would certainly miscarry.——What has happened here will probably the less surprise your grace, because the Archbishop of Dublin [Dr. Hoadly] in London, acquainted the ministry that he thought such a repeal could not pass here; which has been my opinion from the beginning of this session. What representation the dissenters here may make of this affair I cannot tell. But I believe their agents from the North had at first met with either such encouragement or such general civil answers, that they had given greater hopes of success to their friends in the country than there was just reason for. And some of them at the meeting at the castle last Thursday, were for pushing the affair at all adventures, urging that they thought they should not lose the cause very dishonourably, tho' upon what passed there they seemed to have little hopes of its succeeding; in which I think they looked more at their own honour than his majesty's service." In a letter to the Bishop of London, written two days afterwards, the archbishop furnishes this additional information:—"I am apt to think that there were near three to two against it among the commons; and the majority was so clear that I question whether many who were for it would not have

bill be received after Friday next for the repeal of any clause in any act to prevent the further growth of Popery." See vol. vi. p. 326.

absented themselves or have voted against it, if it had come to a division, to avoid marking themselves to no purpose. And I am fully satisfied that in the House of Lords there would have been at least two to one against it."

Such was the unsuccessful termination of this effort to repeal the obnoxious test! Let the lesson which this failure teaches be carefully borne in mind. The Presbyterians too readily acquiesced in it at first, being assured by the High Church party that it would be speedily abolished. But it had now existed thirty years, and its repeal seemed more hopeless than ever; nor was the attempt renewed till nearly half a century afterwards, when it was at length crowned with success. The only relief extended to the Presbyterians during this reign was an act passed in the year 1738, by which they were exempted from all prosecutions for marriages celebrated in their congregations by ministers who had qualified under the Toleration Act.<sup>38</sup> This act, so far as it went, was an important boon. For though it did not directly legalise Presbyterian marriages, and even studiously withheld that name from them, yet, as it sanctioned and provided for their celebration, and exempted them from prosecutions in the ecclesiastical courts, it justified the inference that the legislature looked upon them as valid and unimpeachable.

During these political struggles and external vicissitudes, the Presbyterian Church continued to enjoy internal prosperity, busied in endeavouring to train up an educated ministry, and to secure for them adequate encouragement. Symptoms of a desire to lower the standard of ministerial<sup>39</sup> education had, in some

<sup>38</sup> 11 George II., chap. 10. It was entitled, "An Act for giving further ease to Protestant Dissenters with respect to Matrimonial Contracts," the legislature not deigning to call them *marriages*. It passed through parliament, and received the royal assent as part of the customary bill of indemnity, though it is printed in the statutes as a separate act, which it was not.

<sup>39</sup> The MS. of Dr. Reid terminates here abruptly. He had reached the foot of the page, and, intending to turn the leaf, had written part (*min-*) of the word "ministerial;" but it was the will of Him, whose providence extends to every stroke of the pen, that the sentence should be finished by the hand of another. Dr. Killen here takes up the narrative, and for the remainder of this history he alone is responsible.

quarters, been recently exhibited ; but, in 1730, a rule formerly adopted by the synod was revived, and ordered to be punctually observed by all the presbyteries of the Church. According to this arrangement, every candidate, after having obtained the degree of master of arts, was required to study divinity at least four years.<sup>40</sup> The synod soon afterwards passed a resolution, designed at once to maintain the numerical strength of its existing congregations, and to encourage young men of promise to devote themselves to the service of the Church. When a minister died, and when his flock disagreed as to the choice of a successor, it occasionally happened that an influential minority withdrew from the meeting-house, and took steps for the erection of another place of worship. Thus a Presbyterian population, not more than sufficient for the care of one pastor, was sometimes split up into two congregations. To prevent such divisions, the synod, at its meeting in Ballymena, in 1733, agreed to the rule, that unless two-thirds of the people concurred in the choice of a minister, the presbytery should not sustain the call, and that the two-thirds should be reckoned according to "the number, quality, and stipend of the congregation."<sup>41</sup> The choice had been previously determined by a simple majority of electors, and this new enactment involved an important, as well as a very questionable change, of the ecclesiastical franchise. As just quoted, it is rather vague, for no explanation is given of what is meant by "the quality" of the parties ; but, practically, the two-thirds of the voters, paying the two-thirds of the annual stipend, constituted what was called a "synodical majority." By introducing the element of money, this law imparted additional weight to the votes of the more opulent, and so far violated the spirit of apostolic discipline, for, as members of

<sup>40</sup> "Abstract," p. 33. Before this time, students sometimes received the whole of their theological education at home. It is related of the celebrated Leland, that "he applied himself to the study of Hebrew and divinity under the direction of some learned and worthy ministers, who greatly assisted him in his studies." ("Life of Dr. John Leland," prefixed to his "Discourses") But the synod now required that every student should attend "two seasons, or at least one, in some Divinity Hall in the colleges abroad."

<sup>41</sup> "Abstract," p. 35.



the Church, the rich and the poor stand upon a level; but it succeeded, to a great extent, in preventing the division of congregations, and it continued to be acted upon, for upwards of a century, by the synod of Ulster.<sup>42</sup>

The separation of the non-subscribers, in 1726, had greatly checked the progress of their principles, and, since that period, their influence as a party had been gradually declining. But still, in several presbyteries of the synod, they had friends and sympathisers who continued to abet their cause. As such parties could now no longer openly oppose the law of subscription, they attempted either to evade its observance or to relax its stringency. Not a few young men were induced to enter upon trials for license in connection with the synod, who would never have thought of pursuing such a course but for the encouragement and support which these ministers afforded. The presbyteries of Armagh, Monaghan, and Killileagh, were particularly suspected of laxity, and the door of the ministry was commonly opened to candidates of questionable orthodoxy, by presenting to them for signature some ambiguous formula, which did not positively commit them to the doctrines of the Westminster Confession. At the annual meeting of synod in 1734, this irregularity was challenged, and as those by whom it had been committed had not the courage to stand forward in its defence, an overture, requiring subscription in terms of "the synod's formula," was unanimously adopted.<sup>43</sup> Even this resolution did not put an end to attempts at evasion, for some pleaded ignorance of the exact language in which the Church required subscription; and, in consequence, in the following year, it was found necessary to insert in the minutes, to which all parties had access, a copy of the authorised formula.<sup>44</sup>

The aspect now presented by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland was calculated to awaken the deepest anxiety in the minds

<sup>42</sup> In 1840, at the time of the union between the Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod, the amount of stipend paid by those entitled to vote ceased to be regarded in the election of a minister.

<sup>43</sup> "Abstract," p. 35.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 35.

of all possessed of spiritual discernment. Among her pastors there were able and accomplished men, but some of the most gifted had very little relish for the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. The pulpit services of several of the non-subscribers, since their exclusion from the synod, had not removed the doubts which had existed as to their soundness in the faith. A minister of the Church of Scotland, who heard Mr. Abernethy preach in Dublin, when he was about to remove from Antrim to Wood Street, remarked that "he did not apply the Scriptures which came in his way to the Divinity of Christ, but exceedingly waived that subject when he had fair occasion for it," and that, for this reason, "a good many of the more serious sort" in that congregation were "not for his coming there."<sup>45</sup> There is, indeed, no evidence that, at this time, any Presbyterian minister in Ireland either avowed or embraced Unitarianism; but many, by avoiding doctrinal discussions, and by speaking in depreciating terms of the value of articles of faith, gave just cause for dissatisfaction and alarm. Those members of the synod of Ulster who were most valiant for the truth, were scarcely able to cope with the opponents of creeds in tact and eloquence; and as the minds of a considerable number of the younger ministers, who had studied theology in Scotland, had been unsettled by the lectures of Professor Simpson, the non-subscribers had good grounds for looking forward to a coalition, at no distant period, with those from whom they had been separated. But events which are to be recorded in the following chapter gave a new turn to this controversy, and somewhat deranged the calculations which present appearances legitimately warranted.

<sup>45</sup> Wodrow's "Analecta," vol. iv. p. 162.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

A.D. 1736-1750.

*Rise of the Secession—Its popularity—Application from Lisburn to the Associate Presbytery—Cherry's Sermon before the Sub-Synod of Armagh—Case of Aprichard, a licentiate, who scruples Subscription—Case of Moody of Newry—Origin of the Seceding congregation of Lylehill—Settlement of Osborne at Newtownlimavady—Disputes in the Presbytery of Armagh, and its division—Case of Mr. Ferguson and the people of Markethill—Carlisle's Synodical Sermon—Ordination of Patton at Lylehill—Application from Markethill to the Associate Synod—Fisher of Glasgow visits Ulster, and confers with Allen of Dromore, and King of Dromara—"Supplications" to the General Synod from various congregations—Publication of "A Serious Warning"—Division of the Seceders into Burghers and Antiburghers—Controversy between Seceders and Ministers of the General Synod—Public discussion at Ballyrashane—Increase of Seceding congregations—The minister of Ray removes to Belfast, and secession begins at Ray—Origin of the Seceding congregations of Ballyronney, Newtownlimavady, and Ballibay—General Synod refuses to treat of communion with Non-Subscribers—Daniel Galey accuses a licentiate of heterodoxy—Black installed at Boardmills, Mayn ordained at Ballyronney, and Arrott at Markethill—Pamphlets against the Seceders.*

In the year 1712, the yoke of patronage was reimposed, by parliamentary enactment, on the Church of Scotland. Almost all the divisions which have since taken place among the Presbyterians of North Britain may be traced to that most unrighteous proceeding of the English legislature. For some time after it was passed, the act remained nearly a dead letter, as the ecclesiastical courts were at first unwilling to comply with its provisions; but, about the commencement of the reign of George II., the ruling party in the Church began to pursue a different policy, and peremptorily to insist upon its observance. Their arbitrary conduct led to the most unhappy consequences. When the presentee, or the individual who had obtained the appointment to a

vacant parish, was unacceptable to the people, the presbytery, in many cases, refused to be concerned in his settlement; and the assembly found it necessary to name a commission to act for the refractory judicatory, and to ordain the object of the patron's choice in despite of the opposition of the congregation. The passing of the Patronage Act had grievously offended the Scottish Presbyterians, and these violent settlements aggravated the public dissatisfaction. But the assembly, meanwhile, pursued its course with reckless determination; and when some of its own most popular and worthy ministers murmured and protested, it attempted, by the high hand of ecclesiastical authority, to coerce them into submission. These movements produced THE SECESSION. In November 1733, the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine of Stirling, the Rev. William Wilson of Perth, the Rev. Alexander Moncrieff of Abernethy, and the Rev. James Fisher of Kinclaven, withdrew from the jurisdiction of the Church of Scotland, and shortly afterwards formed themselves into a separate body, under the designation of "*The Associate Presbytery.*" They were soon joined by several other ministers, among whom the Rev. Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline may be particularly mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

The fathers of the secession were men of piety and zeal, and some of them were distinguished pulpit orators. Their assertion of the rights of the people in the election of ministers secured for them the approval of a large section of their countrymen; and the fidelity with which they expounded the doctrines of grace contributed greatly to the attractiveness of their ministrations. By forfeiting the status and emoluments which they had previously enjoyed, they had nobly attested their religious sincerity; and many who questioned the wisdom of their separation from the national Church were constrained to give them credit for intrepidity, integrity, and self-denial. In several parts of the country, where ministers had been settled in defiance of the protestations of the people, many had withdrawn from the parish churches, and, whilst destitute of stated pastors, had sought to promote their mutual edification by means of associations for

<sup>1</sup> M'Kerrow's "*History of the Secession Church,*" p. 72. Edition of 1848.



prayer. As soon as it was known that the Associate Presbytery was disposed to attend to the wants of such societies, it had numerous applications for a supply of religious ordinances. Its members were extolled as the champions of sound doctrine, as well as of ecclesiastical freedom; and wherever they appeared as preachers, they attracted large audiences.

An account of the proceedings of the Associate Presbytery soon reached the North of Ireland. The intelligence did not concern the Presbyterians of this country so deeply as their brethren across the channel, for patronage was unknown in the congregations of Ulster; but still the disinterested conduct of the members of the new judicatory induced not a few of the people here to sympathise with them in their struggles, and to entertain a favourable opinion of their distinctive principles. The Irish Presbyterians were not altogether satisfied with the state of matters in their own synod. The recent regulation, giving increased influence to the rich in the appointment of their spiritual instructors, was doubtless offensive to the humbler classes; the vacillation exhibited by many of the ministers, in the controversy with the non-subscribers, had exposed them to suspicion; and the ill-disguised Pelagianism delivered from several of the pulpits was exceedingly distasteful to the more pious and intelligent worshippers. The first decided symptoms of a disposition to fraternise with the Scotch Seceders appeared at Lisburn. Mr. M'Cracken, the minister of that place, who has been mentioned so often in the preceding pages, died in November 1730; the congregation then remained a considerable time vacant, and the various steps which were taken, with a view to the choice of a successor, occasioned no little altercation. At length, in June 1732, the Rev. Gilbert Kennedy was ordained to the pastoral charge. Mr. Kennedy soon afterwards received a call from the congregation of Killileagh, where he was installed early in the following year. During his short pastorate in Lisburn, the excitement of the people had scarcely time to cool down, and his speedy removal seems to have greatly aggravated their dissensions. The congregation now lost its confidence in the presbytery of Bangor, with which it had been previously connected, and

was, in consequence, transferred to the care of the presbytery of Templepatrick. At this time it remained without a pastor upwards of three years. After much confusion, the Rev. William Patton, minister of Ervey and Carrickmaclin, obtained a call, and was installed here in the month of July 1736.<sup>2</sup> His appointment was strenuously opposed; and when the dissentients found themselves baffled in their efforts to prevent his settlement, they resolved to renounce the jurisdiction of the synod of Ulster, and to put themselves under the care of the Associate Presbytery. About three months after Mr. Patton's installation, a memorial, signed by no less than two hundred and eighty heads of families, was accordingly transmitted to Scotland, stating that a minister had been imposed upon them by the presbytery of the bounds, and craving "that one might be sent them who would preach the Gospel, not in wisdom of men's words, but in the purity and simplicity thereof."<sup>3</sup> The circumstances of the Associate Presbytery did not permit them to comply with this request, but they were gratified by its presentation, and they appointed Mr. Ebenezer Erskine to write an encouraging answer to their Irish correspondents.

This application from Lisburn was the first approach, on the part of the people of Ulster, to the Scottish Secession. For several years afterwards no similar memorial was forwarded from this country. But passing occurrences were not calculated to increase the confidence of the laity in their ministers. In a sermon preached before the sub-synod of Armagh in July 1736, which was subsequently published, the Rev. George Cherry of Clare gave his auditors pretty distinctly to understand that he disapproved of the zeal with which subscription was enforced.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> MS. Session-Book of the Lisburn congregation. When Mr. Patton was chosen, a large portion of the congregation was in rebellion against the authority of the synod. It would seem that this party did not come forward to vote when the poll was taken. They protested, notwithstanding, against Mr. Patton's installation, and complained that a minister was set over them contrary to their wishes. MS. Minutes of the Synod of Ulster.

<sup>3</sup> Secession Records.

<sup>4</sup> This sermon was soon after published. Its title is, "The Duty of a Minister to be a Pattern of Good Works. A Sermon preached before the

Assuming, as a fundamental principle, that "unanimity amongst Christians in matters of faith is never to be expected," he took particular pains to show how his brethren should exercise moderation and forbearance, even though they "may sometimes contradict one another when they preach in the same pulpit." "Should this case," said he, "happen never so often, the bad effects of it might be easily prevented, if, as often as ministers preach on matters of faith *that are not very important*, they would briefly recite the contrary opinion, and having modestly confuted it, they would *inform their audience* that they did not look upon their doctrine to be essential, *however useful it might be.*"<sup>5</sup> No wonder that the people were beginning to distrust guides who looked upon certain doctrines of revelation as not "essential" parts of the "counsel of God," and who informed their audiences that there are "matters of faith" which, "however useful," are "not very important."

We are not, however, to infer that the great body of the ministers of the synod of Ulster were now prepared to approve of the sentiments embodied in this discourse; but Mr. Cherry belonged to a large and active minority, who were anxious to form a reunion with the presbytery of Antrim. The policy of this party was distinctly developed in a case which first occupied the attention of the Church in 1738. Mr. Richard Aprichard, a young man of respectable talents and acquirements, then on trials for ordination before the presbytery of Armagh, had intimated that he entertained scruples with regard to some sections of the Confession of Faith. When the affair was brought under the notice of the synod, it appeared that a standing rule had been neglected, as his objections had not, in the first instance, been submitted to the several presbyteries; and it was carried, after some discussion, that until these inferior courts had been consulted, the supreme judicatory could pronounce no decision. Mr. Aprichard attended the next meeting of synod at Dungannon,

particular Synod of Ardmagh, on Tuesday, July 27, 1736. By George Cherry, M.A." Duod., pp. 37. The Rev. George Cherry was ordained in 1725, as assistant to his father, the Rev. Moses Cherry, minister of Clare.

<sup>5</sup> Sermon, p. 21.

and presented a paper, containing, as was understood, a statement of his views in relation to the doctrines mentioned in those parts of the confession which he was unwilling to subscribe; this document discovered that the creed of its author was strongly tinctured with Pelagianism; and when he was asked whether he was prepared to sign those articles of the Westminster formulary to which he had heretofore made no objections, he at first gave an unsatisfactory answer, and, when more closely pressed, returned a positive refusal.<sup>6</sup> His heterodoxy was now sufficiently clear, and it was accordingly suggested that his license, as a preacher, should be withdrawn. As Mr. Aprichard by this time saw that the presbytery of Armagh would not be permitted to ordain him, he came forward and put an end to the debate by renouncing the jurisdiction of the General Synod.

The rejection of this heterodox candidate for ordination would not have attracted much notice, had it not been for the pertinacity with which he was supported by Mr. Cherry and other ministers. The most strenuous efforts were employed to obtain the sanction of the Church to the terms on which he sought to dispense with subscription. Motion after motion was artfully proposed, with a view to secure the votes of the wavering and unwary; and when the party found all their exertions unavailing, they had the temerity to enter two distinct protests upon the minutes. As these protests were accompanied with reasons which contained reflections, not only on the synod itself, but also on individual members, they increased the irritation which the controversy had created; and though the synod had so far sustained its credit and consistency as to set aside Mr. Aprichard's application, yet the fact that no less than twelve of its own ministers had recorded their dissent from its decision, had a tendency to lower its reputation in the estimation of a large portion of the community.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> MS: Minutes of the Synod of Ulster for 1739. Mr. Aprichard had received a call from the congregation of Mourne. He afterwards published a "Narrative" of his case, to which Mr. Thomas Kennedy, minister of Brigh, replied in another pamphlet.

<sup>7</sup> As the protests were not put into the clerk's hands, for insertion in the minutes, until about the close of the meeting, when the parties who felt ag-



Another act of the synod of 1739 did not escape the observation of those lay members of the Church who were anxious for the maintenance of an orthodox ministry. The Rev. James Moody, minister of Magherally, had lately received a call to Newry, but as he was unwilling to renew his subscription to the confession, he had not yet been installed. A committee, appointed to confer with him, reported that "he professed himself to be of subscribing principles;" and without stating whether he had any other objections, added, "that he scrupled in regard to the article of the magistrate's authority."<sup>8</sup> This vague apology was accepted, and the presbytery of Armagh was instructed to proceed with his installation. But the suspicions of those who questioned his soundness in the faith were not allayed by the circumstance that he appeared among the protesters against the synod's deliverance in the case of Mr. Aprichard.

Whilst these proceedings served to show that the synod faltered in enforcing its own law with regard to subscription, accounts of the successful progress of the Scotch secession continued to reach Ulster. Many families in the neighbourhood of Lisburn, who had memorialled the Associate Presbytery for a supply of ordinances shortly after the installation of Mr. Patton, still remained dissatisfied with the ministry of that gentleman; and others not far distant, at a place called Lylehill, were now disposed to make a similar application. The motives which influenced the people of Lylehill appear to have been of a mixed character. As they belonged to the congregation of Templepatrick, they could not have objected to the doctrine preached to them, for the Rev. William Livingston, their minister, was a decided Calvinist, who had taken an active part in the contro-

grieved by them had no opportunity of explanation or reply, it was ruled, the year following (1740), that, in future, reasons of protest should not be recorded without the synod's special permission. "Abstract," p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod for 1739. It appears that Mr. Moody never renewed his subscription. (Clark's "New Light set in a Clear Light," p. 45.) It would seem, too, that he never was formally installed as minister of Newry, though he officiated as the pastor of the congregation for forty years. "Defence of the Answer to the Presbytery of Armagh's Appeal," p. 6.

very with the non-subscribers.<sup>9</sup> Their numbers, and their distance from Templepatrick, probably led them to think of obtaining a pastor for themselves; and the conduct of the neighbouring ministers, who refused to sanction the erection of the new congregation, weakened their attachment to the synod of Ulster. An offence, given either by Mr. Livingston himself, or by a member of his family, to a person of some influence who resided near Lylehill, seems also to have contributed to the feeling of estrangement which prevailed throughout the district.<sup>10</sup> Their first petition to the Associate Presbytery was presented towards the end of the year 1741. It was followed up by another a few months afterwards; and, in August 1742, Messrs. John Gibson and Samuel Henderson appeared as commissioners to support a memorial, "earnestly requesting supply of sermon."<sup>11</sup> These deputies were successful; and, about the 1st of September, they returned home, in company with Mr. Thomas Ballantyne, the first seceding preacher who visited Ireland.<sup>12</sup> Mr. Ballantyne

<sup>9</sup> See chap. xxv., notes 66 and 69, and the text. Mr. Livingston was ordained minister of Templepatrick in 1709, and died in 1758. In 1755, the Rev. Robert White, a native of Larne, was ordained as his assistant.

<sup>10</sup> "The family of Henderson had a farm in Ricamore under the Upton family; when the lease was expired, the esquire granted a lease of it either to Mr. Livingston or to his son, which gave so much offence to Mr. Henderson and his friends, that they withdrew from the congregation." Stephenson's "Historical Essay on the Parish and Congregation of Templepatrick," p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Clark's "New Light set in a Clear Light," pp. 88, 89. John Gibson married the daughter of his fellow-commissioner, Samuel Henderson, and among their great grandchildren are the Rev. John Barnett, D.D., Presbyterian minister of Moneymore, and James Gibson, Esq., one of the elders of Rosemary Street Church, Belfast, at present assistant-barrister for Queen's County, and late M.P. for Belfast.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 89. A New-Light minister from Dublin, who happened to be on a visit in the North at this time, thus refers to these proceedings:—"The Seceding Presbytery, usually called the Erskinites, upon an application from a few giddy people in the head of Templepatrick and Killead parish, have very rashly sent over a candidate who, when I was at Antrim, preached two Lord's-days to vast multitudes. He has returned, and has along with him a supplication, subscribed by considerable numbers, for a minister of that kidney." Letter from Dr. Duchal to Mr. William Bruce, dated October 1, 1742. "Notices of William Bruce, by Thomas Dix Hineks," p. 8.

remained little more than a fortnight in the country, but, during his visit, he preached repeatedly to numerous audiences ; and, in the October following, a document was laid on the table of the Associate Presbytery, announcing "the accession" of "a body of people in Ireland, being about ninety persons, inhabitants of Templepatrick, Killead, and Crumlin."<sup>13</sup> Mr. Gavin Beugo, a licentiate of the Church of Scotland, who had espoused the cause of the secession, was now sent to labour for a short time as a missionary in the county of Antrim. He arrived about the beginning of January 1743, and preached eight Sabbaths. Messrs. Thomas Ballantyne and John Erskine<sup>14</sup> were afterwards appointed to preach here on the third and fourth Sabbaths of August ; but by this time the Associate Presbytery had become so popular in Scotland, that it could not overtake all the claims on its ministerial services ; and, though several applications were presented to it from Lisburn, as well as from Lylehill, it does not appear that, for the remainder of the year, it was able to make any further arrangement to meet these appeals.

Whilst the Associate Presbytery was furnishing occasional supplies of preaching to one or two districts in the North of Ireland, dissensions continued in the synod of Ulster. A new topic for discussion was now furnished, by a disruption which took place about this time in the congregation of Newtownlimavady. The Rev. William Conyngham, the minister of that place, died in May 1740 ; there was then a protracted struggle among the people relative to the choice of a successor, and at length, in May 1742, the Rev. Henry Erskine was ordained to the pastoral charge. Meanwhile a party adhered to another candidate, Mr. Joseph Osborne, and though his supporters were comparatively few, they

<sup>13</sup> Secession Records. Some of the individuals in this country, who first joined the Seceders, were Scotchmen by birth, who had been long acquainted with members of the Associate Presbytery. Clark's "New Light set in a Clear Light," p. 90.

<sup>14</sup> Mr. John Erskine was the second son of the Rev. Ralph Erskine. He was at this time a licentiate of the Associate Presbytery. In the following year, he was ordained to the pastoral charge of the Secession congregation of Leslie, Fifeshire.

were wealthy and influential. Having applied in vain to their own presbytery of Derry to be erected into a new congregation, they had recourse to the presbytery of Antrim, and with the aid of commendatory letters from some members of synod by whom they were supported, they induced that body to receive them, and to ordain Mr. Osborne as their minister. These disorderly proceedings were condemned by all who were concerned for the maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline; and when they were brought under the notice of the synod assembled at Dungannon, in June 1742, a series of overtures was adopted, announcing the determination of the Church to punish probationers who encouraged divisions in vacant congregations, as well as to censure ministers who countenanced such probationers in applying for ordination "to any association not belonging to the General Synod."<sup>15</sup> When Mr. Osborne joined the presbytery of Antrim, his party asserted their right to occupy the meeting-house; and, as it was erected on a plot of ground to which one of them had the legal title, they succeeded in obtaining possession of the building, so that Mr. Erskine and his congregation were obliged, for a time, to worship in the open field in the depth of winter. But Mr. Osborne and his adherents soon discovered that their connection with the presbytery of Antrim was prejudicial to their interests as a congregation; and accordingly, at its annual meeting in June 1743, they presented a memorial, praying to be taken under the care of the synod. By some management this document was not brought forward for consideration until many, whose hostility might have been anticipated, had set out on their way home. When it was introduced, at the very close of the business, it met with a most determined opposition, and a counter-memorial was presented from Mr. Erskine's congregation, complaining of their unjust expulsion from the meeting-house; but as those members who were favourable to Mr. Osborne were present in their full strength, and as they used their utmost efforts to support him, they were able, when the question of his reception was put to the vote, to carry it in the affirmative by a considerable

<sup>15</sup> "Abstract," p. 40.



majority. Mr. Osborne was, indeed, obliged to express his concern because he had irregularly applied for ordination to the presbytery of Antrim, and he was required, in terms of the authorised formula, to subscribe the Westminster Confession of Faith; but, on complying with these conditions, he was formally admitted a member of the synod.

The records of the Church show that this case excited uncommon interest, and that many were indignant at the hasty reception of Mr. Osborne. At the annual meeting of synod in 1744, the Rev. John Stirling, the venerable minister of Ballykelly,<sup>16</sup> was permitted to enter on the records, on the part of himself and others, a protest against the decision, as rash, unfair, and unconstitutional. The matter might not have been permitted to rest here, had it not been for the prudence with which Mr. Osborne acted after his reception by the synod, as contrasted with the indiscretion of his rival. The sympathy at first awakened in favour of those who attended Mr. Erskine's ministry gradually abated, for it was soon discovered that the man of their choice was a rather unamiable individual, who could never live at peace with his co-presbyters, and who miserably failed in sustaining the credit of the ministerial character.<sup>17</sup>

Whilst the two parties into which the Presbyterians of Newtownlimavady were divided, were contending before the courts of the Church, another affair of a more perplexing description continued to embarrass the General Synod. For some years, misunderstandings had existed among the members of the presbytery of Armagh, and their counsels had been distracted by their mutual jealousies and distrust. The one party believed that the other did not faithfully maintain the doctrines of the Westminster Confession; and though the ministers whose sentiments were chal-

<sup>16</sup> Mr. Stirling was ordained in 1701, and died in January 1752.

<sup>17</sup> His congregation was called the congregation of Drumachose. He demitted the charge in October 1761. His rival, Mr. Osborne, was chosen moderator of the General Synod in 1780, and died in 1800. Shortly after his reception into the synod, the dispute relative to the meeting-house was submitted to arbitration, and amicably settled. MS. Minutes of Synod for 1744 and 1745.

lenged were not prepared to admit the charge of heterodoxy, it is by no means clear that it was altogether destitute of foundation. The first occasion on which they betrayed a decided want of confidence in each other was when the business of Mr. Ap-  
 richard, already mentioned, was under consideration; and certainly the zeal with which some of them supported a candidate of such questionable principles, was at least sufficient to awaken suspicion. Not long afterwards, the case of another licentiate led to another controversy. Mr. Michael Henry had received a call from the congregation of Drumbanagher; but as many families in the congregation earnestly objected to his settlement, and as the frivolity of his deportment was calculated to make a most unfavourable impression upon the minds of persons of intelligence and piety, some of his fathers in the ministry scrupled to proceed with his ordination.<sup>18</sup> This matter led to a discussion, in the course of which the parties too plainly discovered their estrangement; and, as they were nearly equally balanced, their debates were, perhaps, conducted with the greater pertinacity. At the annual meeting of synod in 1742, a division of the presbytery was proposed, but in the hope that a little time would bring about a reconciliation, it was resolved that no change should be made for another year. In 1743, the prospect of harmony appeared as distant as ever, and the parties were now separated by the synod into the two presbyteries of Armagh and Dromore.<sup>19</sup> Even this

<sup>18</sup> It was arranged, at the meeting of synod in 1742, that Mr. Henry and the congregation of Drumbanagher should be transferred to the care of the presbytery of Killileagh. He was ordained in October 1742. He never seems to have maintained a high character as a man of piety. See Clark's "New Light set in a Clear Light," p. 54.

<sup>19</sup> At the time of the division, the following ministers and congregations were connected respectively with the presbyteries of Armagh and Dromore:—*Armagh presbytery*.—John Menogh, Lurgan; George Cherry, Clare; John Maxwell, Armagh; James Moody, Newry; George Ferguson, Markethill; ———, Carlingford; Andrew Kennedy, Mourne; ———, Banbridge. *Dromore presbytery*.—Gilbert Kennedy, Donacloney, or Tullylish; James Allen, 2d Dromore; John King, Dromara; Robert Thomson, Ballyrone; William Thomson, Magherally; John Mulligan, Mountnorris; ———, Loughbrickland; Robert Gordon, Rathfriland; James Johnson, Donoughmore.

arrangement did not put an end to their hostilities, for a paper war soon commenced, which attracted a considerable share of public attention.<sup>20</sup> The most exciting topic of discussion was furnished by a breach which took place about this time in the congregation of Markethill. Thê Rev. George Ferguson had been ordained there in March 1741, but his ministry had proved unacceptable to many of the people; and, after the division of the old presbytery of Armagh, the malcontents had been supplied with preaching by the presbytery of Dromore. This proceeding, on the part of their former co-presbyters, was resented by the members of the new presbytery of Armagh, as a most unwarrantable interference; for they maintained, that as Markethill was under their care, no other co-ordinate court of the Church, without a breach of ecclesiastical propriety, could send preachers to any part of the congregation. When the question came before the synod for decision in 1744, the presbytery of Dromore was required to confine its ministrations to parties under its own superintendence; and its conduct, in providing ordinances for malcontents under the jurisdiction of the presbytery of Armagh, was pronounced to be "irregular and offensive."<sup>21</sup> But as a *fama*

<sup>20</sup> Some time prior to June 1743, the parties afterwards connected with the presbytery of Dromore prepared a paper, intended for presentation to the General Synod, and headed, "A Declaration in favour of Truth and Christian Liberty." Soon after the division which then took place, the two presbyteries became embroiled in the affair of Markethill; and, in the beginning of the year 1744, the presbytery of Armagh published a tract, entitled, "An Appeal to the Impartial World." To this the presbytery of Dromore published a rejoinder, called "An Answer to the Appeal of the Presbytery of Armagh, wherein the Proceedings of the Presbytery of Dromore are laid open to public view." The other party put forth "A Reply" to this production; and, in 1745, the controversy terminated by the publication of "A Defence of the Answer to the Presbytery of Armagh's Appeal."

<sup>21</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod of Ulster for 1744. The following are the names of the commissioners who appeared before the presbytery of Dromore, and presented the first memorial from Markethill for a supply of preaching, viz.:—James Gray, Michael Ochletree, John Grier, Samuel M'Caskie, John Marshall, Hugh White, John Armstrong, David Clements, and John Grier. The immediate predecessor of Mr. Ferguson in the pastoral charge of Markethill was the Rev. Archibald MacLaine, whose son, the Rev. Thomas Mac-

*clamosa*, impeaching Mr. Ferguson's soundness in the faith, had obtained extensive circulation, the synod instructed the presbytery of Armagh, with commissioners from several other presbyteries, to meet at Markethill, on a prescribed day, that the matter might be investigated. This inquiry led to no satisfactory result. Mr. Ferguson was said to have denied the doctrine of original sin; but, before the trial, parties expected to appear as witnesses were intimidated; and, as no sufficient testimony was produced, the court adopted the dubious verdict of "not proved."<sup>22</sup> The presbytery of Armagh was understood to sympathise strongly with the non-subscribers, and the taunts which some of its ministers most imprudently addressed, on this occasion, to those dissatisfied with Mr. Ferguson, greatly aggravated the excitement of the neighbourhood. The complainants had all along regarded the members of the presbytery of Dromore as the friends of orthodoxy, and they now desired more earnestly than ever to be placed under their ecclesiastical supervision. They accordingly presented a memorial to that effect to the synod of 1745; but the application was unsuccessful, and those who did not relish the ministry of Mr. Ferguson were instructed "to join Portnorris,<sup>23</sup> or any other congregation subject to the presbytery of Dromore."

The treatment of the people of Markethill indicated the grow-

laine, minister of Monaghan, was the father of the celebrated Dr. Archibald Maclaine, the translator of "Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History." Dr. Maclaine officiated for half a century as minister of the Scottish Church at the Hague. He resigned his charge in 1796, and died at Bath, in England, in 1804, in the eighty-second year of his age. He was for some time preceptor to the King of the Netherlands. Steven's "History of Scottish Church, Rotterdam," pp. 309, 310.

<sup>22</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod for 1745. At the time of the investigation, the court well knew why witnesses were not forthcoming. "They offered their solemn declaration to clear some facts before a magistrate then present, yet no security to them or their families to do it with safety was allowed; but antecedent to their inquiry, a legal prosecution was threatened which muzzled one of the parties." ("Defence of the Answer to the Appeal," p. 10.) The same pamphlet states—"The discontented people are one hundred and seventy-nine souls, as we are informed—some two, some four, others five miles from the place of worship where they can join with freedom." (p. 10.)

<sup>23</sup> This is now called the congregation of Mountnorris.



ing influence of an anti-evangelical party in the synod of Ulster. A minister, believed by many to hold the errors of Pelagius, was permitted, with impunity, to intimidate his accusers, so that the charges against him could not be substantiated ; and a large body of people, who could derive no benefit from his services, and who were able, as well as willing, to support a pastor of their own, were not permitted to form themselves into a separate congregation. At this period the adherents of the non-subscribers were full of hope, and some of them did not hesitate to say, that if a "few men were dead,"<sup>24</sup> alluding to certain leading ministers now far advanced in life, the synod and the presbytery of Antrim would again be united. The sermon delivered by the outgoing moderator, at the opening of the synod of 1745, proclaims the confidence of the abettors of what was now called "moderation." The Rev. John Carlisle, the preacher on this occasion, was the minister of Clogher. Discoursing from the words of the apostle, "concerning zeal, persecuting the Church," he describes "different forms of Church polity, different creeds and confessions, and human schemes of Divine truth," as the "tithe of mint, anise, and cummin." He condemns a zeal for what he calls "the private and distinguishing opinions of particular sects and parties;" he declares that "subscription is nothing," and that "non-subscription is nothing;" he asserts that "zeal is only fit for wise men;" and he endeavours to convince his auditors that this zeal is "a dangerous thing in the weak and ignorant sort of people," being "an edge-tool which children in understanding should not meddle much with." The interest taken by the elders in the subscription controversy must have been regarded by him as particularly censurable ; for he admonishes them to "meddle not in things which they do not understand," and he reminds them that the clergy "may have many *little disputes* among themselves" with which others "have no immediate concern." At a time when the Church enjoyed outward peace, and when a spirit of lukewarmness was threatening to paralyse her energies, the subject of discourse was singularly inappropriate ; and the observa-

<sup>24</sup> Clark's "Survey," p. 26.

tions of the preacher, as they related to her struggles for the maintenance of an evangelical testimony, were peculiarly objectionable. Comparatively few ministers heard the sermon preached, for the greater number of the members had not yet arrived at the place of meeting; but some, who were present, listened to it with impatience, and, at a private meeting of the brethren assembled on the following day, complained of several statements which the ex-moderator had uttered.<sup>25</sup> Mr. Carlisle, when thus challenged, found it easy to put such a construction on his observations as rendered them pointless and harmless; and the objectors, unwilling to disturb the peace of the Church, consented, with rather too much facility, to accept of his explanations. They had soon cause to repent of their acquiescence. The author immediately published his discourse,<sup>26</sup> and, as it had prefixed to it an extract from the minutes, signed by the moderator and clerk, stating that his "explications" of certain expressions it contained had given satisfaction to the assembled ministers and elders, not a few inferred that it had virtually received the *imprimatur* of the synod. Those who marked the signs of the times could not fail to be impressed by the perusal of this sermon; for the fact that it had been preached before the supreme court of the Church, and that it had been permitted to pass without rebuke, was an indisputable evidence of the progress of "moderate" principles.

The inhabitants of Lylehill and the neighbourhood, who had already announced their adherence to the Associate Presbytery of Scotland, were not indifferent spectators of the proceedings of the synod of Ulster. Confirmed in their attachment to the cause of the secession by the increasing symptoms of defection in the

<sup>25</sup> Semple's "Survey Impartially Examined," p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> It appeared with the following title:—"The Nature of Religious Zeal. A Sermon on Phil. iii. 6, preached at a General Synod held at Antrim, June the eighteenth 1745. By John Carlisle, M.A." Duod., pp. 32. The quotations given above are from pp. 16, 18, 27, 30, 31. Mr. Carlisle states, in the preface, that he had been solicited "by most of the ministers at the General Synod" to publish the discourse. Mr. Semple understands by this, "most part of the ministers who came in time to hear sermon," who, according to his account, did not exceed twenty. Semple's "Survey Impartially Examined," p. 2.

Church from which they had withdrawn, they laboured, with the zeal of new converts, to induce others to join their standard. For several years, as we have seen, part of the congregation of Lisburn had been dissatisfied with the ministry of Mr. Patton ; and, about the beginning of the year 1744, a number of families in the town and its vicinity followed the example of the people of Lylehill, by placing themselves under the care of the Scottish judicatory.<sup>27</sup> That body had now grown to such an extent by new accessions, and its business had multiplied so rapidly, that it was obliged to adopt a new ecclesiastical organisation. On the 11th of October 1744, its members constituted themselves into "The Associate Synod," consisting of the three presbyteries of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dunfermline. By this arrangement the presbytery of Glasgow was entrusted with the superintendence of the adherents of the secession in Ireland.<sup>28</sup> During the year, several seceding preachers came over, by appointment, to this country, and, in 1745, their supporters were prepared to give a call to a minister. The Associate Synod held its first meeting at Stirling, on the first Tuesday of March 1745 ; and, on that occasion, Mr. Isaac Patton, a licentiate under the care of the presbytery of Dunfermline, was commissioned to preach nine Sabbaths in Ulster. According to his instructions, he was to officiate four Sabbaths at Templepatrick, two at Belfast, two at Lisburn, and the remaining Sabbath "where he judged most for edification." At the same time, Mr. John M'Ara, a member of the presbytery of Glasgow, was required to visit Ireland in the end of June, and to preach there four Sabbaths.<sup>29</sup> His mission led to important results, for, on the 6th of July, he presided at the preparation of the call presented to the first seceding minister settled in Ireland. On that day, the adherents of the Associate Synod in Templepatrick, Belfast, and Lisburn, unanimously agreed to invite Mr. Isaac Patton to be their pastor.

Mr. Patton was well fitted for the station which he was now invited to occupy. He has been described as "a little, active,

<sup>27</sup> Secession Records.

<sup>28</sup> M'Kerrow, p. 197.

<sup>29</sup> Secession Records.

sharp-eyed man," of respectable talents and ardent temperament, "exceedingly quick in all his motions," a keen controversialist, and noted for his "quaint, remarkable, and forcible sayings."<sup>30</sup> But, notwithstanding the anxiety of the people for his settlement at Lylehill, the state of matters in Scotland obliged his fathers in the ministry to defer his ordination. Shortly after the date of the call, the Pretender made his appearance in that country, and for nine months all ranks were kept in a state of perpetual disquietude by the alarms of civil war. During this period, there seems to have been little intercourse between the members of the Associate Synod and their Irish adherents. At length, in April 1746, steps were taken for proceeding with the ordination. The synod, then assembled in Edinburgh, directed the presbytery of Glasgow to appoint a commission for the purpose, and recommended the presbytery of Dunfermline, under whose care Mr. Patton had been previously placed, to send over one of their members to take part in the ceremony.<sup>31</sup> By four ministers nominated accordingly, he was solemnly invested with the pastoral office at Lylehill, on the 9th of July 1746.<sup>32</sup> A meeting-house was soon afterwards erected there for the accommodation of the worshippers.

We have already seen how the General Synod, in 1745, refused to recognise the discontented Presbyterians of Markethill as a separate congregation. This decision did not, however, ex-

<sup>30</sup> "Irish Unitarian Magazine" for July 1847, p. 230.

<sup>31</sup> Secession Records.

<sup>32</sup> The following record, published for the first time in the "Irish Unitarian Magazine" for July 1847, describes the pecuniary arrangements made for the support of the first Irish Secession minister:—"At Ballynaglough, July the 8th 1746, the day preceding Mr. Isaac Patton's ordination, then and there it was agreed upon, betwixt the members of presbytery, and some members of this congregation representing the whole, viz.—that Mr. Isaac Patton should have fifty pounds, sterling, yearly, by way of stipend; the one half to be paid by this associate congregation, and the other half by Belfast and Lisburn, while supplying the same; and then, whatever time Lisburn is laid aside, this congregation is to make up their quota; and whatever time Belfast is laid aside, this congregation is to make up their quota, to Mr. Patton.—Extracted of John Gibson, Session-Clerk.'



tinguish their hopes of obtaining a minister. They immediately turned their attention to the Associate Synod, and, in the month of September of the same year, applied to it for preaching. As it appeared that the memorialists made their appeal simply on the ground of dissatisfaction with their pastor, and that they were ignorant of the peculiar principles of the Church with which they now intended to ally themselves, the synod did not deem it expedient, in the first instance, to accede to their petition. The war which wasted Scotland had probably some influence in dictating this decision, for it is not strange that neither ministers nor licentiates were willing to undertake a distant journey at so perilous a juncture. But that the people of Markethill might not be altogether discouraged, they were instructed, in the meantime, to make themselves acquainted with the "Act and Testimony," and the other formularies of the synod; and they were given to understand, that on a future occasion they might hope for a more favourable answer.<sup>33</sup>

The terror created in Scotland by the presence of the Pretender imposed a temporary check on the missionary zeal of the secession ministers; but, on the restoration of tranquillity, they resumed their labours in Ireland with increased energy. About two months after the ordination of Mr. Patton at Lylehill, Mr. John Swanston, one of the licentiates of the Associate Synod, was appointed to itinerate three months in that country; and Mr. George Murray, a member of the Associate Presbytery of Edinburgh, was sent over to preach one Sabbath at Belfast, another at Saintfield, a third at Markethill, and a fourth at Ballinderry.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Secession Records.

<sup>34</sup> Secession Records. At this time the congregation of Saintfield was vacant. The Rev. James Rainey, the former minister, died in January 1745, and about two years and a half afterwards, or in July 1747, the Rev. Richard Walker was ordained to the pastoral charge. To this period we may trace the origin of the seceding congregation of Boardmills. The Rev. Clotworthy Brown, ordained February 1746 as minister of Ballinderry, was one of the New-Light party. In the following year he was removed to Ballynure. Unwilling to renew his subscription to the confession, he refused to be installed in Ballynure by the presbytery of Templepatrick, and, in consequence, joined the presbytery of Antrim. MS. Minutes of Synod for 1747-48.

Not long afterwards, one of the founders of the secession, the Rev. James Fisher of Glasgow, the son-in-law of Ebenezer Erskine, visited Ireland, and preached at Ballynahinch, Belluly near Banbridge, and various other places. So great was the popularity of Mr. Fisher, that persons had been known to go from Ireland to Kinclaven, the little Scottish parish where he was originally settled, to attend his communions.<sup>35</sup> When he appeared in Ulster, he attracted crowded audiences, as every one was anxious to see and to hear a preacher who enjoyed such reputation, and who had made so great personal sacrifices in the cause of the secession. Even some of the ministers of the synod of Ulster were disposed to bid him welcome. He himself states, that he was "kindly entertained"<sup>36</sup> at the house of Mr. Allen, the minister of Dromore, and that he had taken friendly counsel with Mr. King, the minister of Dromara. The excitement occasioned by the controversy between the presbyteries of Armagh and Dromore had yet scarcely subsided, and Messrs. King and Allen seem to have considered that their hands would be strengthened, and the cause of truth promoted, by the preaching of the missionaries of the Associate Synod within the bounds of the congregations of their "moderate brethren." But Mr. Fisher had another object in view in his conferences with these ministers. He was anxious to encourage a disruption in the synod of Ulster,<sup>37</sup> as he saw that, if the evangelical party could be induced to adopt the testimony of his Church, the secession would be at once firmly and extensively established in the North of Ireland. The friendly intercourse between Mr. Fisher and these members of the presbytery of Dromore was not, however, of long continuance.

<sup>35</sup> M'Kerrow, p. 833.

<sup>36</sup> Letter to Mr. King. In his reply to this letter, Mr. King says—"I could look upon it as no bad thing in the Seceders, their being much concerned about us, nor did I like very ill their first concerning themselves in our affairs. I hop'd even their coming over to this country, however irregular, might have some good effects. I must own I took it to have a promising aspect." ("A View of Seceders," p. 23.) This pamphlet, which was printed at Belfast in 1748, simply contains a letter from Fisher to King, and King's reply.

<sup>37</sup> "A View of Seceders," p. 27.

Though Messrs. King and Allen did not pretend to vindicate either the spirit or the conduct of many of their brethren, they considered that all overt acts of ministerial delinquency could be corrected by the faithful exercise of discipline, and they did not feel themselves at liberty to attempt a breach in the synod of Ulster, inasmuch as they could not conscientiously object to any of its constitutional principles. They were not, therefore, at all prepared to join the ranks of the secession. It soon appeared that the two parties could not cordially co-operate, and their correspondence terminated in a settled alienation. But their temporary intercourse had a healthful influence, for it led the members of the presbytery of Dromore to expose existing abuses with greater boldness than before, and to promote an agitation of the public mind extremely detrimental to the progress of New-Light sentiments. At the annual meeting of synod, held at Magherafelt in 1747, "supplications" were presented from Magherally, Dromore, Dromara, and Ballyroney, "complaining of sundry errors and corruptions" which were creeping in upon the Church, and praying for their removal.<sup>38</sup> These supplications were supported by commissioners, who pointed out, in detail, the evils which the petitioners deplored. It appeared that the tide of infidelity, which had been sweeping over Europe, had set in upon the North of Ireland, and that various publications of a deistical tendency had been recently spread throughout Ulster. Several ministers of the General Synod, though professing an orthodox creed, had justly incurred suspicion by lending their countenance to publications which directly assailed the doctrines of the Westminster Confession. A new edition of Taylor "On Original Sin," one of the most artful treatises in defence of Pelagianism that has ever appeared, had been lately undertaken,<sup>39</sup> and the more serious and intelligent portion of the Presbyterian public had been astonished and alarmed by hearing that some of their own pastors had subscribed for the publication.

<sup>38</sup> MS. Minutes of General Synod for 1747.

<sup>39</sup> The treatise of the great Jonathan Edwards "On Original Sin," in answer to this work by Taylor, did not make its appearance until the year 1757.

At this time there was not a single minister in the synod who had not publicly professed his adherence to the Westminster formularies; and those who had betrayed their inconsistency, by encouraging the reprint of the work of Taylor, made only an abortive effort to excuse themselves, by pleading that they were the friends of free inquiry, and that their purchase of a book did not imply their approval of its sentiments; for it was well known that they had been putting the volume into the hands of members of their congregations, and that, at least in a few instances, a single individual had subscribed for a number of copies.<sup>40</sup>

When the deputies from Dromara and the other congregations connected with the presbytery of Dromore had explained the views of their constituents, a committee was appointed to prepare a statement on the subject, to be submitted to the consideration of the synod. The result of these deliberations was such as some, at least, of the petitioners could scarcely have anticipated. Though the "supplications" had a special reference to the conduct of those who were now known by the designation of "moderate men,"<sup>41</sup> the ministers implicated had not the courage to stand forward in their own vindication. They deemed it prudent to bow, for the time, before this demonstration of popular feeling, and agreed to a document admitting, in general terms, the existence of the evils of which the petitions complained; but they adroitly contrived to blunt the edge of these acknowledgments, by recounting, as grievances, some items which many who signed the "supplications" would have never thought of including in such an enumeration. Of late, the missionaries of the Associate Synod had been itinerating in all directions, and vast multitudes had been attending their sermons. As often as they enjoyed an opportunity of addressing the congregation of a moderate or

<sup>40</sup> "Some members of the synod subscribed for the reprinting of Mr. Taylor's book against original sin, particularly Mr. Henry Jackson (minister of Banbridge), for *thirty-two* copies." King's Letter to Fisher, "View of Seceders," p. 17.

<sup>41</sup> The designation "moderate men" was applied to those members of the synod who sympathised with the non-subscribers. It occurs in the controversy between the presbyteries of Armagh and Dromore, and was then obviously in current use. See "Answer to the Appeal," p. 10.



New-Light preacher, they had galled himself and his friends by the severity with which they assailed his ministrations. The anti-evangelical portion of the synod eagerly grasped at the present opportunity for retaliation. They proposed to insert in the document to be prepared an attack upon their new enemies; and as the Seceders had now lost the confidence of the presbytery of Dromore, and had been endeavouring to establish preaching stations in the congregations of ministers of undoubted orthodoxy, the other members not unwillingly agreed to the overture. The paper now drawn up by the committee was called "A Serious Warning," and was addressed to the Presbyterian laity of Ulster.

This paper, when submitted to the synod, led to some discussion, and several amendments were proposed and adopted. It was then resolved, with only one dissentient voice, that it should be printed, and read on the Lord's-day from the pulpits of all the congregations of the Church. As the document occupies a prominent place in this portion of the history of Irish Presbyterianism, it is here given at length:—

"A Serious Warning to the people of our communion, within the bounds of the synod.

"Whereas this synod has been well informed that several dangerous errors, that sap the very foundation of Christianity, are creeping into our bounds—such as men's denying the doctrine of original sin—the proper and real satisfaction of Christ, and the necessity of his imputed righteousness in order to our justification—as also the necessity of sincere obedience to the moral law to qualify us for communion with God here and eternal life hereafter<sup>42</sup>—and that the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity of Persons in the Unity of Essence, and their being of one substance, power, and eternity—and the Gospel ordinances instituted by

<sup>42</sup> King states ("View of Seceders," p. 32) that this clause was put into the first draught of the "Warning," "by some who suspected the Seceders that way," and mentions that he objected to its insertion, knowing that they could not be justly charged with antinomianism; but adds, that it was permitted to remain, because it appeared "that there were others, particularly in Dublin, who denied the necessity of obedience to the moral law, and it was fit to warn against them."

Christ, the great Head and Lawgiver of his Church, are questioned or denied by some—nay, even the Sacred Scriptures themselves, disbelieved and openly impugned:—this synod thought it their duty both to lament this mournful case, and to express, hereby, their utmost detestation and abhorrence of, and to bear testimony against these and all other errors whatsoever, and do take this opportunity to warn and obtest all that are in their communion watchfully to guard against them, and to continue steadfast in the faith that has been handed down to us from our forefathers contained in the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and summarily abridged in our Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms. And for this end we would advise unlearned men not to read erroneous books, but rather that they apply themselves to the reading of the Sacred Scriptures, and such practical sound writings as, by the Divine blessing, may be of use to fill their hearts with grace, and not their heads with vain disputes, or dangerous errors. And we strictly enjoin all of our communion to beware of putting erroneous books into the hands of unlearned men, which we look upon to be as dangerous as putting swords into the hands of children who know not how to use them.

“And whereas some teachers, known by the name of Seceders, have, in a most disorderly way, intruded themselves into our bounds, and in many cases have vehemently railed against this synod, as if we kept in our communion such as are tainted with the most dangerous errors, we hereby declare that no such thing has ever yet appeared to us in a judicial way, and sure it would be most contrary to the rules of reason and presbyterial government to cast out of our communion any member or members without trial or evidence of any sort; and therefore we challenge and at the same time cheerfully invite all such as pretend to know any such person or persons, to appear and libel them, according to the right and known rules of presbyterial Church discipline and government—and we faithfully promise if any be convicted, that they shall be duly censured according to the demerit of their crime. And further we recommend it to all the inferior judicatories of this Church to do their utmost, in a true presbyterial

way, to purge this Church of all unsound members, if any such be among us; and to endeavour with all true zeal and diligence to preserve, as much as lies in their power, the purity of doctrine, discipline, and worship established in this Church within their respective bounds."

Those members of the synod whose orthodoxy was suspected could join with perfect safety in this challenge to the Seceders, for the real ground of complaint was, not that they directly assailed any of the great doctrines of the Gospel, but that they did not "declare all the counsel of God." By their studied silence, or their ambiguous phraseology, they left their hearers to infer that they either discarded or questioned certain principles prominently set forth in the confession. Piety was now rapidly declining, and too many of the ministers were exhibiting a very secular spirit; but there was not at this period even one avowed Unitarian or Arminian among the members of the synod of Ulster.

Though this "Warning" notices the Seceders in no very complimentary language, its publication is an evidence that they were already beginning to exercise a very salutary influence. The public mind was now excited, the associate ministers enjoyed an extensive popularity, and some of the members of the General Synod clearly saw, that if they adhered to the lukewarm and vacillating course which they had lately been pursuing, they would endanger the stability of their congregations. Hence it was that they agreed with so much unanimity to the publication of this ecclesiastical manifesto. Another act of the annual meeting of 1747 shows how recent movements had balked the hopes of the advocates of moderation. Towards the close of the proceedings, one of the party moved that the synod should consider "how far communion with the non-subscribers should be allowed." The proposal was designed to prepare the way for a reunion with the presbytery of Antrim. To moot such a question at such a time was highly injudicious, as its discussion was calculated to add immensely to the agitation which the Seceders had produced; and as the greater number of the ministers and elders had already set out on their way homewards, it was urged that the consideration of a matter of such deep importance could not then be intro-

duced. As the "moderate men" had sometimes, on former occasions, carried their measures in a thin house, the other party seem to have been afraid to meet their motion with a direct negative, and they accordingly suggested that a deliverance should be delayed for another year. The friends of the non-subscribers rejected this very reasonable proposition, and insisted upon an immediate decision. When the roll was called, it was plain that they had miscalculated their strength, as the motion for delay was carried "by a great majority."<sup>43</sup>

A few months before this meeting of synod, an event occurred fitted greatly to damage the reputation of the secession. Its adherents, in consequence of their separation from the Established Church, occupied a new social position, and it had become a question whether they could, with propriety, take an oath administered to the burgesses in several of the borough towns of Scotland. The oath pledged the party adjured to support "the true religion presently professed within the realm, and authorised by the laws thereof," but the exact meaning of this formulary was keenly disputed. One party maintained that the oath, having been framed with a view to prevent Papists from becoming burgesses, merely implied an approval of the true religion itself, as that which was settled and professed in the realm, and that, as the Seceders were sound Protestants, they might take it with safety; the other party contended that it should be rejected by all the faithful supporters of the Associate Testimony, inasmuch as it involved a recognition of patronage, and all the legalised abuses of the existing Presbyterian establishment.<sup>44</sup> Had they agreed to differ on the subject, and to act as their convictions dictated, they would have displayed a becoming forbearance;

<sup>43</sup> MS. Minutes of the Synod for 1747.

<sup>44</sup> The following is the disputed clause of the burgess oath:—"Here I protest before God, and your lordships, that I profess, and allow with my heart, the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorised by the laws thereof: I shall abide thereat, and defend the same to my life's end; renouncing the Roman religion called Papistry." This clause was contained in the oath administered to burgesses in the towns of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Perth. M'Kerrow, p. 210.



but those who condemned the oath insisted that submission to their views should be made a term of ministerial and Christian fellowship. The Secession Church was occupied upwards of two years with these discussions, and at length, in April 1747, they issued in a disruption. The two parties claimed each the designation of "The Associate Synod;" but, in popular language, those who defended the taking of the oath, and those who condemned it, were known respectively as Burghers and Anti-burghers. The acrimony with which the controversy was conducted, as well as the narrow spirit it exhibited, lowered the Seceders in public estimation, and Presbyterian discipline suffered a terrible indignity when the Antiburghers pronounced upon the Erskines and their adherents the sentence of the greater excommunication.<sup>45</sup>

Mr. Patton, the seceding minister of Lylehill, was present at the meeting of the Associate Synod which ended in its disruption. The Scottish burgess oath did not concern Irish Presbyterians, and, in as far as they were personally interested, they might fairly have regarded the debates which it engendered as if they had pertained to a question of barren and unprofitable casuistry; but the controversial spirit is infectious, and the Irish, as well as the Scotch Seceders, were divided into two sections. Mr. Patton and his congregation joined the Antiburghers; other societies, recently established in Ireland, enrolled themselves under the standard of the Burghers. Had the Irish Presbyterian Church been at this period in a healthy condition, the schism occasioned by the burgess oath might, at least in Ulster, have proved fatal to the new sect; but it seems to have had comparatively little influence, and the existence of a deep and extensive dissatisfaction with the General Synod is clearly established by the fact, that the Seceders continued to prosper, notwithstanding the scandal connected with this division.

The publication of the "Serious Warning" produced a great sensation. It was hailed with much satisfaction by a large portion of the laity attached to the synod of Ulster, but the Sece-

<sup>45</sup> M'Kerrow, p. 236, 237.

ders attacked it with all their powers of logic and declamation. In their estimation, it was but "a cunning gravestone upon truth,"<sup>46</sup> for they alleged that it professed zeal for doctrines which its framers had virtually entombed. They insisted that it attempted to practise a gross delusion on the laity, by requiring them to come forward and prosecute unsound teachers, at a time when the synod was so corrupt that the condemnation of a heterodox minister was not to be expected. They complained that it treated themselves with much injustice, by describing them as disorderly persons, railers, and intruders. But, perhaps, their most weighty and telling charge was based upon that part of it which speaks of "the necessity of *sincere obedience* to the moral law *to qualify us* for communion with God here and eternal life hereafter." This, said they, is the very essence of "New-Light" doctrine. "Nothing can qualify any of Adam's family for communion with God here, and eternal life hereafter, but vital union with the Lord Jesus by faith," and the statement in the "Warning" "overturns the doctrines of original sin, the satisfaction of Christ, and his imputed righteousness."<sup>47</sup> Whatever may be thought of the other objections urged against this ecclesiastical proclamation, it must be admitted that the Seceders here discover their correct acquaintance with theology; for the members of the General Synod, in their anxiety to insinuate a charge of antinomianism against their troublesome assailants, had incautiously adopted phraseology which cannot stand the test of Scriptural criticism.

<sup>46</sup> Fisher's Letter to King. The Seceders likewise complained, that whilst the "Warning" attacked them with so much severity, it took no notice of the Moravians, who had lately made their appearance in Ulster. In 1746, the Rev. John Cennick, originally a Methodist preacher, but then a minister of the Church of the United Brethren, visited various parts of the North of Ireland. In the controversial pamphlets of the day, his adherents are styled "the *wild* Moravians" by the Seceders, as well as by the members of the synod of Ulster. (See Clark's "Brief Survey," pp. 48, 50, 51.) About this time, some of the Moravians were justly charged with fanaticism. Mr. Cennick is said to have been invited to the North of Ireland in 1746 by "a certain zealous man at Ballymenagh." (Cranz "History of the Brethren," p. 421. London, 1780.) He preached to "vast numbers of people." Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Fisher's Letter to King.

The controversy between the Seceders and the synod of Ulster continued for years; but as there was little variety in the arguments employed on either side, the topics generally introduced into the discussion may here be summarily enumerated. The Scottish preachers justified their appearance in Ireland, by pleading the unfaithfulness of the existing ministry. They upbraided their adversaries for their neglect of ecclesiastical discipline; and, in support of the accusation, they affirmed that the ignorant and profane were often admitted to the Lord's table—that parents who did not maintain family worship were suffered to present their children for baptism—and that violators of the seventh commandment were not always censured in presence of the whole congregation. They complained, farther, that ministers did not duly visit and catechise the families committed to their pastoral oversight. The practice of *reading* sermons from the pulpit, which at this time prevailed to a considerable extent among the members of the synod of Ulster, was a grievance on which the Seceders frequently expatiated. "We have never known," said they, "any instances of sermons thus read blessed for the conviction and conversion of sinners. Paper-readers are no preachers of the Gospel.—To what a low pass is the Sabbath-day's work now reduced among Protestant dissenters in the North of Ireland, when multitudes of them must travel several miles to places of public worship to hear and see a man standing up in a pulpit, reading an oration like a schoolmaster."<sup>48</sup> The matter contained in the odious manuscripts elicited a still weightier condemnation, for many of the ministers, instead of proclaiming the glorious Gospel, were said "to discourse like heathen moralists." The personal conduct of the members of the General Synod did not escape the animadversion of their unsparing critics. They were reproached for their inattention to family religion, for their conformity to the world, and for their "excessive entanglement with the affairs of this life."<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Clark's "Survey," p. 38, 39.

<sup>49</sup> "The dissenters think it unseemly that any of their teachers should divert themselves from the work in yarn-buying, linendraping, being lawyers, proctors, distillers of spirits—and being drovers, might have been added."

The parties against whom these heavy charges were preferred were not disposed to permit them to pass unnoticed. Some of them they tried to palliate, and others they attempted to prove groundless. They admitted that the reading of sermons was not uncommon; but without pretending in every case to vindicate the practice, they contended that, under special circumstances, it was perfectly warrantable. They accused the Seceders of exaggeration and calumny, and they called on them to accept of the challenge held out in the "Serious Warning," and to table their complaints before the Church courts of the General Synod, that they might be thoroughly investigated. As the associate missionaries had now commenced to administer the various ordinances of religion in several districts where New-Light doctrine had made very little progress, and as they did not require the usual certificates of character and standing from those who applied to them for admission to communion, they were condemned as destroyers of Presbyterian discipline; and it was alleged that they involved themselves in the guilt of schism, by entering into settled congregations where the Gospel was faithfully proclaimed, and by there setting up altar against altar. Their attacks upon the strain of preaching, at this time but too common amongst the Presbyterian ministers of Ulster, provoked retaliation, and the utmost anxiety was manifested to convict themselves of some theological error. Their ambiguous or unguarded statements were seized on with avidity, and attempts were often made to fasten on them the imputation either of ignorance or of heresy. The severest criticism was applied to the examination of their "Act and Testimony," and it was pronounced absurd, disloyal, and intolerant. Their proceedings in their Church courts were held up to ridicule; and they were represented as a party of impracticable men, who delighted in the whirlwind of sectarian strife, and who, at the termination of their stormy de-

(Clark's "New Light," &c., p. 67.) In the last clause of this sentence, Mr. Clark probably refers to a minister in the county of Derry, who occupied himself with the management of a large stock-farm, to the great neglect of his congregation. This minister was eventually obliged by the presbytery to demit his pastoral charge.



bates about the burgess oath, had just consummated their folly by renouncing communion with each other.

It was not to be expected that these hot belligerents would be always satisfied with fulminating from distant pulpits. More impetuous and chivalrous spirits panted for a closer engagement. It accordingly happened that the one party sometimes challenged the other to a public discussion. On these occasions the merits of the Secession and the General Synod were defended and attacked by their respective champions in the presence of immense auditories. One of the most remarkable of these theological combats took place at Ballyrashane about this period. Mr. John Swanston, a licentiate of the secession, had been preaching in the neighbourhood of Coleraine, and, as he possessed superior talents and a popular address, he attracted much attention. In his sermons, he often declaimed with uncommon vehemence against the defections of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and he thus gave great offence to the members of the synod of Ulster.<sup>50</sup> The Rev. Robert Higinbotham, one of the ministers of Coleraine, who has been previously mentioned in this history, in connection with the subscription controversy, was a person of rather irritable temperament, and though pretty far advanced in life, he could not brook what he regarded as the insults of this Scottish probationer. As he was now moderator of the General Synod, he perhaps considered that he was therefore under special obligations to defend its reputation; and, in an evil hour, he invited Mr. Swanston to meet him face to face, that they might debate the claims of their respective churches. Mr. Swanston was not the man to decline such an invitation; and, on a platform erected in the open air, and surrounded by a prodigious congregation, the parties proceeded with the discussion. No record has been preserved of that day's argument; and as the tongue is, in a certain sense, invincible, it commonly happens in such cases that both sides claim the victory; but tradition reports that the acute

<sup>50</sup> King of Dromore calls him "Mr. Swanston, that noted defamer." ("View of Seceders," p. 9.) He was ordained minister of the seceding congregation of Kinross, in Scotland, in June 1748, and at a subsequent period was elected Professor of Divinity for the Burgher Synod.

Scot more than once sadly distressed the minister of Coleraine with the horns of a dilemma. It is said that Mr. Higinbotham himself was not disposed to boast of his success in this controversy.<sup>51</sup>

During the year 1747, the secession cause made considerable progress in Ulster. The labours of Mr. Swanston and others laid the foundations of the seceding congregations of Ballyrashane and Roseyards. The people of Killenney, or Boardmills, a district between Belfast and Saintfield, were at an inconvenient distance from any place of Presbyterian worship, and influenced partly by a desire to obtain a pastor for themselves, and partly by dissatisfaction with the services upon which they were attending, they applied for preaching to the Associate Synod. In the spring of 1747, the numbers attached to their society were so great, that they considered themselves able to support a minister. In another part of the county of Down, the Seceders, about this time, obtained possession of a house of worship. The Rev. Thomas Creighton, the minister of Moira, died in the end of the year 1741, and the congregation, which was poor, and oppressed with debt, had meanwhile remained without the services of a stated pastor. This state of things produced discontent, and the associate missionaries, who were invited to visit the place during the vacancy, preached with such acceptance, that a large portion of the people resolved to join their communion. So early as April 1747, the Seceders of Moira presented to the Associate Synod a petition, in which they proposed to give a call to a minister.<sup>52</sup> A few months afterwards, a vote of the synod of

<sup>51</sup> The challenge, on this occasion, was conveyed in "A Letter from the Rev. Mr. Robert Higinbotham of Coleraine to his Friend, relating to the principles and conduct of one Mr. Swanton, an itinerant preacher from the Seceding brethren in Scotland, now in the North of Ireland." This document is dated, "Coleraine, April 3, 1747." After stating thirteen objections to the proceedings of Mr. Swanston, Mr. Higinbotham adds (page 7), "I challenge Mr. Swanton [Swanston was his proper name], and all his admirers, to put me on the proof of any of the above particulars, and that this may be known, I beg that you will make this letter as public as you can." Similar discussions were held at Aghadoe, Clontibret, and elsewhere. Clark's "New Light set in a Clear Light," p. 64.

<sup>52</sup> Secession Records.

Ulster provoked the majority of one of its most flourishing congregations to go over to the secession. The Rev. Charles Masterton of Belfast had become infirm, and the congregation invited the Rev. William Laird, minister of Ray, in the county of Donegal, to assist him in the pastoral charge. Mr. Laird, who was greatly beloved by the people of Ray, and connected by birth, as well as by family ties, with the district in which he ministered,<sup>53</sup> was himself averse to the change; and when the call was submitted to his presbytery, it was decided that he should remain in his present congregation. The commissioners from Belfast<sup>54</sup> now appealed to the sub-synod of Derry, but that court unanimously reaffirmed the finding of the presbytery. The commissioners again appealed to the approaching meeting of the General Synod, where, after much discussion, it was carried, by a majority of votes, that Mr. Laird should be removed to Belfast. He was greatly embarrassed by this decision; but as he was unwilling to resist the authority of the supreme court of the Church, he reluctantly resigned the charge of the Ray congregation. The loss of a minister so popular created much dissatisfaction among the Presbyterians of the district; and he had scarcely been installed in Rosemary Street, when the greater part of his former flock renounced the jurisdiction of the synod of Ulster. At the meeting of the presbytery of Letterkenny, on the 21st of October 1747, the members appointed to supply the vacancy reported,

<sup>53</sup> The Rev. Wm. Laird was the son of the Rev. Francis Laird, ordained minister of Donoughmore, near Raphoe, in 1709. Mr. Laird was a popular preacher, and, shortly after his settlement at Ray, received a call from the congregation of Plunket Street, Dublin, which he was permitted to decline. He married the daughter of the Rev. David Fairly, minister of Convoy. The Rev. William M'Clure, minister of the 1st Presbyterian congregation of Londonderry, is the great-grandson of this couple. Mr. Laird died in December 1791. I am indebted to his grandson, Charles Thomson, Esq., one of the honoured founders of the Fisherwick Place Presbyterian Church, Belfast, for the use of several scarce pamphlets which throw considerable light upon the history of this period.

<sup>54</sup> On this occasion, no less than *four* members of the congregation of Rosemary Street appeared as commissioners before the presbytery of Letterkenny, met at Ballindreat. MS. Minutes of the Presbytery of Letterkenny.

“that the people of Ray refused them the benefit of the meeting-house or yard,” and that “one Mr. Smyton, and one Miller, Seceders, preached there.”<sup>55</sup> The Seceders soon afterwards asserted their exclusive right to the possession of the meeting-house, and occupied it for several years,<sup>56</sup> whilst the remnant of the congregation adhering to the General Synod were, meanwhile, obliged to struggle with many difficulties.

Those who originally joined the Seceders were, generally speaking, persons in very humble life, and, as might have been expected from the temptations to which they were peculiarly exposed, they were often charged with censoriousness and indiscretion; yet even those who blamed them as implicated in schismatical proceedings, were disposed to give them credit for zeal and piety. The early associate missionaries must unquestionably have been “in labours more abundant;” for, notwithstanding the paucity of their numbers, they established and supplied preaching stations in almost every quarter of the province of Ulster. Wherever the General Synod had an evangelical and active representative they found few adherents; but where the people were far from a place of worship, or distracted by disputes relative to the election of a minister, or under the superintendence of an inefficient or a New-Light pastor, they almost uniformly met with encouragement. It so happened that at this time the number of vacant charges was considerable, and some of them had been long unsettled. The Rev. Robert Thompson, the minister of Ballyroney, had died in September 1743, and no successor had yet been chosen. The

<sup>55</sup> MS. Minutes of the Presbytery of Letterkenny. Mr. Smyton was a member of the Antiburgher Presbytery of Glasgow, and Mr. Miller a probationer. At the same meeting of presbytery, it is reported that the people of Urney are “in a shattered way through Seceders and other division.” The congregation of Urney was then vacant.

<sup>56</sup> At its annual meeting in June 1752, the congregations of Moira and Ray complained to the General Synod of the heavy expenses they had incurred, and were still likely to incur, in lawsuits “for the recovery of their meeting-houses that some time ago had been violently seized and detained from them by the Seceders.” (MS. Minutes of Synod for 1752.) The congregation of Ray, after the removal of Mr. Laird, remained about seven years vacant; at length, in 1754, the Rev. James Turretine was removed from Tobermore to this charge.



people at length became disheartened, and testified their displeasure against their clerical overseers, by presenting a memorial to the General Synod, at its annual meeting in 1747, complaining that their interests had been neglected by the presbytery of Dromore.<sup>57</sup> The Seceders had already been preaching in the place, and they soon succeeded in organising a congregation. Circumstances of a different character led to the appearance of the associate ministers at Newtownlimavady. Though, as the reader may recollect, two members of the General Synod were now settled in that place, the services of neither were acceptable to many of the Presbyterians of the district. Mr. Osborne belonged to the moderate party in the Church, and his ministrations were disrelished; Mr. Erskine was a more popular preacher, but he had made himself offensive by his indiscretion, selfishness, and ill temper.<sup>58</sup> The Seceders appear to have commenced to preach at Newtownlimavady in 1747, and a deputation of Anti-burghers, appointed to visit Ireland, reported to the Scottish synod, in August 1748, that they had been joined by 105 members and four elders at Drumachose.<sup>59</sup> Some time before, the associate missionaries had been invited to preach in another part of the province. The Rev. Alexander Wadsworth, who had been appointed to the charge of the congregation of Ballibay in January 1744, died prematurely in March 1747. The vacancy which now followed was almost as long as his entire pastorate, for nearly three years passed away before a successor was ordained. In the

<sup>57</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod of Ulster for 1747. The people of Ballyrone, as has been already stated, presented to the same meeting of synod another memorial, or "supplication," on another subject.

<sup>58</sup> In 1746, Mr. Erskine received a call from the united congregation of Tullylish and Donacloney. He was apparently anxious for the removal, and stated, when the matter came before the sub-synod of Derry, that the people of Newtownlimavady, "by their conduct, seemed, in some measure, to disregard him." (MS. Minutes of the Sub-Synod of Derry.) His removal did not take place. In 1750, he was publicly rebuked by the sub-synod, and "suspended for one Lord's-day from preaching." (Ibid.) He was eventually obliged, by the Church courts, to demit the charge of his congregation. See note 49 of this chapter.

<sup>59</sup> Secession Records.

interval, the people became divided ; an application for preaching was forwarded to the Burgher presbytery of Glasgow, and the Seceders eventually established in this neighbourhood one of their largest and most flourishing congregations. At the same time, in addition to the places already mentioned, societies, connected with the Antiburgher synod, were formed at Bangor, Armagh, Aghadoey, Ballykelly, Balteagh, Dunboe, Kilraughts, Ballymoney, and Derrykeichan.<sup>60</sup>

Whilst the associate ministers were thus busily employed in laying the foundations of their Church throughout Ulster, the influence of the moderate party in the General Synod was apparently declining. At its annual meeting in 1747, as has already been related, a proposition, intended to prepare the way for the re-establishment of communion with the non-subscribers, was brought under discussion, and it was then carried, that its consideration should be deferred for another year ; but, in the interim, the Seceders had so effectually sounded the alarm of heresy, and the public mind had become so much excited, that when the question was again submitted in 1748, it was decided, by a large majority, that it could not be entertained.<sup>61</sup> At its next annual meeting in 1749, the synod exhibited a determination to insist on an adherence to its ecclesiastical standards. In the month of August 1748, the Rev. William Fleming, when required to sign the Confession of Faith, prior to his appointment to the pastoral charge of the congregation of Kingseourt, had been permitted, by the presbytery of Monaghan, to subscribe according to an unauthorised formula. Several members of the court, who had not reached the place of meeting when the transaction occurred, afterwards discovered its irregularity, and protested, under the circumstances, against proceeding with the ordination.<sup>62</sup> Mr. Fleming was ordained in the face of this protest ; but when the matter was brought under the notice of the synod, he was required to sign the confession

<sup>60</sup> Secession Records.

<sup>61</sup> MS. Minutes of the Synod of Ulster.

<sup>62</sup> Clark's "New Light," &c., p. 47.

in the regular form, on pain of deposition.<sup>63</sup> The presbytery of Monaghan appear to have pleaded, in extenuation of their conduct, that they had no copy of the declaration which candidates for ordination were expected to subscribe; and, to set aside such an apology, as well as to secure the observance of the law of the Church, "it was ordered that, for the future, one formula, namely, that of the General Synod, shall be used in all the presbyteries," to be subscribed by all parties about to be licensed, ordained, or installed; that "a copy of said formula shall be transmitted by the clerk to each presbytery along with the minutes;" and that "the presbyteries give, yearly, an account of their care and diligence in this matter to the synod."<sup>64</sup>

The decision in another case, which seems to have engaged a large share of the attention of the synod of 1749, contrasts rather strangely with this proceeding. An individual, named Daniel Galey, had complained to the presbytery of Strabane that one of their licentiates, Mr. Thomas Thompson, in a discourse delivered from the pulpit, had pronounced morality to be the foundation of religion. The licentiate had denied the charge, and Galey, having failed to produce the necessary proof, had been censured by the presbytery. It appeared, when the matter came by appeal before the synod, that the accuser had some grounds for his complaint, as Mr. Thompson confessed, "that in an inference of a sermon he had asserted, that if we could imitate God only in his moral perfections, his holiness, goodness, justice, and truth, and if by imitating him in these things we obtained a communion and fellowship with him, and procured his love and approbation, then it followed that morality is the chief end and design of religion."<sup>65</sup> This scholastic jargon, which is but too fair a specimen of much of the preaching of the period, betrays a melancholy ignorance of the true way of a sinner's salvation. Some of the members of the synod immediately objected to the language which the licen-

<sup>63</sup> "Semple's Survey Impartially Examined," p. 45. It is right to add, that the ministers who thus irregularly ordained Mr. Fleming escaped without rebuke. Clark's "New Light," p. 48.

<sup>64</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

tiate had employed, but his friends contrived to relieve him out of the difficulty. At their suggestion, he came forward and stated, that in the passage of his sermon which had given offence, he did not mean "to exclude the mediation of Jesus Christ;" and he afterwards presented a paper to the court, in which he declared, that "the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel is only by the merits and satisfaction of our Redeemer." This very awkward explanation, or rather retractation, satisfied the synod, and poor Galey was rebuked by the moderator "for his rashness in reproaching Mr. Thompson, and cautioned against the like conduct for the future."

The anomalous condition of the General Synod at the period before us is strikingly illustrated by this transaction. Though professing an evangelical creed, its support of evangelical principles was very feeble and equivocal. Here it threw its shield over a licentiate who had shown that he was "ignorant of God's righteousness," and who had been preaching "another Gospel," whilst it censured the man who, at its own bar, had clearly convicted the false teacher. Had the doctrines of the confession been upheld in the synod by able and energetic advocates, the Church would have pursued a course more consistent and more dignified; but the tried champions of orthodoxy were now rapidly passing off the stage, and their places were too frequently supplied by ministers of a different spirit and of different sentiments. The greater number of those who now took a prominent part in the management of ecclesiastical affairs were persons of suspected principles, whose talents for public business gave them an influence in the synod to which they were not otherwise entitled. In particular cases, especially when the testing question of subscription was concerned, they deemed it expedient to give way to popular feeling; but in matters of less general interest, such as that in which this licentiate was involved, they contrived to bewilder and baffle the friends of orthodoxy.

When the General Synod was sitting at Magherafelt, discussing the appeal of Daniel Galey, a deputation from the Burgher Presbytery of Glasgow was employed, in another part of Ulster, in the installation of a seceding minister. On the 22d of June



1749, the Rev. Andrew Black was invested with the pastoral charge of the congregation of Boardmills. Mr. Black had been previously minister of Cumbernauld, in Scotland. In the same month, the Rev. Thomas Mayn was ordained to the charge of the seceding congregation of Ballyroney. Both these ministers were connected with the Burgher Synod; but, on the same day on which Mr. Mayn was set apart to the pastoral office at Ballyroney, a deputation from the Antiburgher Presbytery of Glasgow ordained the Rev. David Arrott<sup>66</sup> to the charge of the congregation of Markethill. Mr. Patton had hitherto been the only member of the Associate Presbytery resident in Ireland, and now, nearly three years after his ordination at Lylehill, three additional ministers were settled in the course of a single month.

About this time, several attacks were made on the Seceders through the medium of the press. The Rev. Alexander Colville, M.D., of Dromore, denounced their tenets as "persecuting, disloyal, and absurd," in a letter addressed "To the people under the care of the presbytery of Antrim." The Rev. Samuel Delap of Letterkenny published "Remarks on some Articles of the Seceders' new Covenant," in which he displays a considerable amount of ability and learning.<sup>67</sup> Shortly afterwards, another pamphlet appeared from the pen of the Rev. Charles Lynd,<sup>68</sup> one of the ministers of Coleraine, entitled, "A Short and Plain Vindication of Several Scriptural Principles." This writer endeavours to convict the associate ministers of antinomianism.

<sup>66</sup> Mr. Arrott died in 1807, at the advanced age of eighty-three. His call to Markethill was drawn up on the 9th of November 1748, and had annexed to it one hundred signatures. (Secession Records.) The Rev. Thomas Mayn was minister of Ballyroney for fifty-seven years. He occupied the chair when the first meeting of the Irish Burgher Synod was constituted at Monaghan in 1779. The Rev. Thomas Mayn Reid, senior clerk of the Irish General Assembly, is his grandson.

<sup>67</sup> Mr. Delap was ordained to the pastoral charge of the congregation of Letterkenny in August 1707. He was one of the leaders of the orthodox party in the synod. He was probably led to publish this pamphlet by the proceedings of the Seceders at Ray, in his own neighbourhood.

<sup>68</sup> For an account of this minister, see chap. xxiv., note 29.

Appended to his pamphlet is "An address to those persons who admire and follow the Seceders."

In the rise of the secession, the spiritual eye cannot fail to recognise the hand of an overruling and gracious Providence. Sectarianism is in itself an evil, and the associate ministers were not always guided by the wisdom from above; but the withdrawal of such men as the Erskines and Fisher from her judicatories, was at once a terrible rebuke to the Church of Scotland, and an emphatic testimony in behalf of the rights of Christ's people. The Burghers and Antiburghers were instrumental in extending the blessings of a pure Gospel to many districts of North Britain which would otherwise have remained under the blighting influence of moderatism. The seceding missionaries appeared in Ireland at a time when the ministry was rapidly degenerating, and when many, by a deceptive subscription to an orthodox creed, were gaining access to Presbyterian pulpits, and deluding Presbyterian congregations. Few of the wealthier classes joined them, but the common people heard them gladly. They commended themselves, by manifestation of "THE TRUTH," to the hearts and consciences of the multitude. It often happened that those who took an active part in establishing seceding congregations left the communion of the synod of Ulster with a heavy heart, for it was endeared to them by hallowed recollections; but its fold had been entered by false caretakers, and many could no longer find in it the green pastures and the quiet waters to which faithful shepherds had once guided them.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

A.D. 1759-1770.

*Acts of Indemnity passed—Increase in the number of congregations—Efforts for an augmentation of the Royal Bounty—Establishment of the Widows' Fund—The Antrim Presbytery invited to join in the scheme—Progress of New-Light doctrines—Promoted by Scottish Professors—Account of Dr. Hutcheson and Dr. Leechman—State of the Established Church of Ireland—Bishop Clayton an Arian—The Law of Subscription neglected—Settlement of Seceding ministers, and erection of Seceding congregations—Account of the Rev. Thomas Clark of Ballibay—His controversial publications, his ministerial usefulness, and his imprisonment—Failure of a proposal to have the Synod constituted of Delegates from the several Presbyteries—Overture for Renewal of Intercourse with the Non-Subscribers—Account of Dr. Leland—Representatives from the Antrim Presbytery appear in the General Synod—Address to King George III.—Slow Progress of the Secession—Applications to the Synod from North America—Sermon preached before the Synod by the Rev. Gilbert Kennedy—Case of the Rev. John Nelson and the congregation of Ballykelly—Correspondence with the Non-Subscribers—Covenanting Ministers appear in Ulster—The Rev. John Cameron joins the Synod of Ulster, and embraces various errors—Declining state of religion.*

THE failure of their efforts in 1733 for the repeal of the Test Act greatly dispirited the Irish Presbyterians, and many years passed away before they again made any vigorous exertions for the removal of their political grievances. Meanwhile successive administrations contrived, by the introduction of bills of indemnity, to palliate the evils of unwise legislation. The Irish parliament then met biennially, and every session an act was passed to relieve Protestant dissenters who held commissions in the militia, and other departments of the public service, from the penalties attached to their nonconformity.<sup>1</sup> These acts were the

<sup>1</sup> These acts of indemnity may be traced, in the "Statutes of Ireland," throughout the whole of the reign of George II., and the early part of that of George III.

dictates of political necessity. The wars of Great Britain with foreign powers imperilled the safety of this country, and its peace had been recently threatened by the appearance of the Pretender in Scotland. Little reliance could be placed on the loyalty of the Romish population; and government, in the hour of difficulty, would have been deprived of the right arm of its strength, had it been unable to avail itself of the services of the Ulster Presbyterians.

Of late, various causes had contributed to check the growth of the population of the North of Ireland. The winter intervening between the autumn of 1739 and the spring of 1740, better known as the period of "the black frost," is still remembered in the traditions of the country for its unparalleled severity. Several unproductive harvests followed, and Ulster partially experienced the miseries of famine.<sup>2</sup> The spirit of emigration, which had been so extensively diffused throughout the northern province, was still unabated, and considerable numbers of the most enterprising and industrious inhabitants had removed to the American colonies. But though many circumstances had conspired to retard the social advancement of the country, the population, under the care of the General Synod, had been steadily increasing, and, within the last thirty years, about thirty new congregations had been organised.<sup>3</sup> As, except in a few special cases, the Royal Bounty was distributed equally among the ministers, the individual shares had thus been gradually diminishing, so that, notwithstanding the additional grant of George I.,

<sup>2</sup> In 1745, the Synod of Ulster appointed a fast, to be observed throughout all the congregations of the Church, assigning, as the primary reason, "the awful tokens of the Divine displeasure against this part of the world, discovered in the *unnatural seasons*, threatening a scarcity of bread." (MS. Minutes of Synod.) In 1740, there was "such a scarcity of provisions, that the mortality, caused by scanty and improper food, very sensibly thinned the population." Gordon's "Ireland," vol. ii. p. 218. See also Burdy's "Life of Skelton," p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> At a conference between the synod of Ulster and commissioners from the presbytery of Antrim, held in 1751, it appeared that there were then 157 congregations belonging to the synod, and thirteen to the presbytery of Antrim. Minutes of Interloquitur for 1751.



it now yielded little more to each recipient than it had done prior to its augmentation.<sup>4</sup> This constant decrease of the annual dividend might, in more prosperous times, have been a theme for gratulation, as it was created by the enlargement of the Church, but, in the present position of the province, it only added to the discouragements of the pastoral office. Whilst it had become more expensive to support a family, in consequence of the rise in the price of food, and other necessities, the congregational stipend had been rapidly declining; for the great mass of the Ulster Presbyterians lived by pasturage or agriculture, and they had suffered so severely by unpropitious seasons, that many of them could afford to give but little towards the maintenance of their ministers. At several meetings of synod, between the years 1744<sup>5</sup> and 1750, the propriety of applying for an addition to the

<sup>4</sup> The sum now received by each minister amounted to little more than £9 annually. A double portion was voluntarily given to a few of the brethren who laboured in weak frontier congregations. Another arrangement of this period, of a benevolent character, is also worthy of record. Each of the larger and wealthier congregations contributed annually a fixed sum towards the support of some minister whose flock could afford him but little stipend. A weak congregation was thus sustained by a number of others in better circumstances, and its pastor reckoned upon receiving from them a definite amount every year. The synod reserved to itself the arrangement of details.

<sup>5</sup> In the Minutes of the Interloquitur of synod for 1744, the following entry appears:—"This interloquitur considered whether this would be a proper time for making application to court for the removing of some of our grievances, and an augmentation of *Regium Donum*. Ordered that Messrs. James White [minister of Broughshane] and Menogh [minister of Lurgan] prepare a draught of a letter to this purpose, to be transmitted to Mr. Stewart of Ballylane [Ballylawn] now in London, and another to Mr. Gibson there, that they may be considered in next interloquitur." The following is the minute of the next interloquitur.—"Messrs. White and Menogh did not write the letters as appointed in the former interloquitur. It is now agreed that Mr. James White, in conjunction with Mr. Drennan in Belfast, write to the above-named gentlemen, that they use their interest at court for us. And if these brethren receive a favourable answer, then the synod's fixed committee is to be called by the moderator." Mr. Gibson, mentioned in the preceding minute, was probably connected by family ties with the Irish Presbyterian Church. He had already rendered good services to the synod, as, in the minutes of 1741, there is a resolution to the effect, that "a quantity of Irish table-linen, to the value

Royal Bounty had been the subject of serious deliberation. About this time circumstances occurred which induced the ministers to hope for an augmentation. When the Pretender raised his standard in North Britain, government became alarmed for the security of Ireland, as it was believed that the Romanists of the country were not indisposed to join in the rebellion. The zeal and intrepidity with which the Ulster Presbyterians now evinced their attachment to the house of Hanover tended greatly

of £20, be given to the lady of Mr. Gibson, in London, for his having served us generously and faithfully in soliciting and transmitting the additional R. D. these several years past." (See note 33, chap. xxiv., and note 25, chap. xxvi., and the text.) The history of the other gentleman mentioned in the minute, Mr. Stewart of Ballylawn, deserves particular notice. He was born about the year 1699, and was the younger son of Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart, proprietor of the estate of Ballylawn, on the borders of Lough Swilly, in the county of Donegal. His elder brother, Captain Thomas Stewart, who was married to the sister of Judge Ward, succeeded to the Ballylawn property, and his sister, Martha, married John Kennedy, Esq., of Cultra, near Holywood, in the county of Down. Mr. Alexander Stewart was educated in Derry, where, as a boarder, he attended the diocesan school, then taught by Mr. Blackhall. He was trained to business in the office of Mr. Isaac Macartney, a highly respectable Presbyterian merchant of Belfast (see chap. xxiii., note 29), and was for some time engaged, on his own account, in mercantile pursuits. During his residence in Belfast, he appears to have attached himself to the party of the non-subscribers; and the reason why Mr. Drennan, then minister of the 1st congregation of Belfast, in connection with the presbytery of Antrim, was one of the parties selected to conduct the correspondence relative to an increase of Regium Donum, probably was, because he was personally acquainted with Mr. Stewart. On the demise of his brother, Captain Thomas Stewart, who died without issue, about the year 1731, Mr. Alexander Stewart succeeded to the Ballylawn estate, then worth about £400 per annum, and retired from business. In June 1737, he married his cousin, Miss Mary Cowan, with whom he obtained a fortune of about £100,000. He purchased, in 1743, the estate of Comber, in county Down; and, in the following year, the estate of Newtownards, from Robert Colville, Esq. He subsequently purchased several other estates in Down and Derry. Mr. Stewart possessed a vigorous intellect; and, as he was zealously attached to the Presbyterian Church, of which he was an elder, he soon acquired great influence throughout Ulster. His private character was most exemplary, and he was eminently entitled to the praise of "Honour and Honesty," the motto of the banner under which, in times of political excitement, the adherents of his family were subsequently ranged. By his marriage with Miss Cowan, he had eight

to reassure the administration. Within a week after the Marquis of Tullibardine had appeared in arms for the Pretender in Scotland, the Protestants of Down and Antrim were actively engaged in making arrangements to resist the enemy, should he venture to land upon their shores. In a "Declaration," dated the 24th of August 1745, they published their determination, "at the hazard of their lives and fortunes, to oppose all attempts against his majesty's person and government."<sup>6</sup> At the

children, three of whom died in infancy. As his sons grew up, he gave them a very liberal education ; but instead of permitting them to attend Trinity College, Dublin, or Oxford, or Cambridge, where they would have been under Episcopalian influence, he exhibited his high-principled consistency by sending them to Presbyterian colleges. His eldest son, Robert, was educated at Geneva, and his sons, John and Alexander, at the University of Glasgow. John, a youth of great promise, was drowned, when bathing in the Clyde, during his attendance at college. In the year 1760, Mr. Stewart sat, for a short time, in the Irish parliament, as one of the representatives of the city of Derry. His son Robert represented the county of Down in two successive parliaments, and was afterwards created Marquis of Londonderry. His son Alexander purchased an extensive property at Ards, in the county of Donegal, and settled there. Mr. Stewart died at Newtownards, on the 22d of April 1781. He has been described by a Presbyterian minister, who was well acquainted with him, as "a man of polite and pleasing manners, a clear and comprehensive understanding, and principles truly liberal both in politics and religion." (Dickson's Narrative, pp. 6, 7.) It is rather singular that the commission, relative to the increase of the Regium Donum, as described in the minute quoted at the commencement of this note, was successfully executed, nearly sixty years afterwards, by Mr. Stewart's grandson, the great Lord Castlereagh.

I am indebted for much of the information furnished in the preceding note to a valuable MS. in the possession of Guy Stone, Esq., J.P., Barnhill, Comber, which I have been kindly permitted to examine. Mr. Stone is himself lineally descended from Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart of Ballylawn, and Mr. Alexander Stewart was married to Miss Cowan, in the house of his great-grandfather, Major Stone of Dublin. The MS. to which I refer was written in 1788, by Mr. Stone's grand-uncle, the Rev. Samuel Stone, rector of Culdaff, in the county of Donegal. As many readers will, doubtless, feel interested in the subject, I have noted in the appendix a number of curious facts relative to the history of the Cowans and Stewarts, which I have gleaned from this authentic family record. Its author died in spring 1798, aged seventy-six years.

<sup>6</sup> "Historical Collections relative to the town of Belfast," p. 89.

same time, they proceeded to provide themselves with arms, to form volunteer associations, and to take other steps to support the cause of the reigning sovereign. The Earl of Chesterfield, then lord-lieutenant, did not fail to appreciate these seasonable demonstrations of loyalty; and it would appear that, on the extinction of the insurrection, the synod had been encouraged to expect some token of royal favour. At the meeting of 1746, a memorial to government was accordingly prepared, in which, after setting forth their "present distressing circumstances, occasioned by the poverty of the country,"<sup>7</sup> the petitioners urged their claim for an increase of the grant. The Rev. James White of Broughshane,<sup>8</sup> and the Rev. John Maxwell of Armagh,<sup>9</sup> were commissioned to repair to London with this memorial, and to endeavour to avail themselves of whatever influence the friends of the Church possessed at court to secure the concurrence of his majesty's government. A committee of synod was appointed to meet in the commencement of the month of August to decide upon the most suitable time for making this application; but the

<sup>7</sup> MS. Minutes of Interloquitur of Synod of 1746.

<sup>8</sup> Mr. White, who was the son and immediate successor of the Rev. Fulk White, minister of Broughshane, was ordained in 1716, and died in 1761. He was of robust make, and of dignified appearance. He was a man of talent, and as he took a prominent part in the business of the Church, he had much influence in the synod. John White, Esq., of Whitehall, near Broughshane, late high-sheriff of the county of Antrim, is his great-grandson. During Mr. White's ministry, a great ferment was created in Broughshane and the neighbourhood, by a dispute relative to the meeting-house green. The landlord, Mr. O'Neill, was, it appears, dissatisfied that it should be converted into a bury-ground, and threatened to plough it up, and thus to re-enter on the possession. Mr. White is said on this occasion to have applied to government, and, by means of some influence brought to bear upon the lord of the soil, to have induced him to withdraw his threats. Tradition states, that the first corpse interred in the cemetery was that of a Dutch soldier belonging to the army of King William III.

<sup>9</sup> Mr. Maxwell was a man of fine taste, and of considerable talent. He was, perhaps, the most influential of the New-Light party in the synod. In 1753, he was chosen moderator, and at the opening of the next annual meeting, preached a sermon from Col. iii. 14, 15, which gave great offence to the more zealous Calvinists. For farther notices of this minister, see Stuart's "Armagh," pp. 490-93.



Earl of Chesterfield had resigned the viceroyalty in the spring ; discouraging letters appear to have been meanwhile received from influential parties acquainted with the disposition of the ministry ; and as, in the minutes for the succeeding year, there is no reference whatever to the proceedings of the delegates, it is somewhat doubtful whether they ever executed their commission. In 1749, the synod again resolved to make an effort for an augmentation of the bounty, but it was soon discovered that the ministry were not yet prepared to look with favour on the application, and the attempt was consequently abandoned.<sup>10</sup>

At this time the income of many of the members of the General Synod scarcely enabled them to lay up any provision for their families, and on the death of a minister, his widow was not unfrequently reduced to a state of destitution. At almost every annual meeting of the supreme court of the Church, cases of distress, urgently claiming their sympathy and aid, were reported to the brethren. But though the attention of the synod had been frequently directed to the condition of the widows and orphans of deceased members, and though several expedients had been devised for their assistance, all the arrangements hitherto adopted afforded only a temporary and unsatisfactory relief.<sup>11</sup> In 1750,

<sup>10</sup> The Rev. Francis Iredell of Dublin, who had been agent for the Regium Donum, died in the beginning of the year 1739. At the following meeting of synod, Mr. James Lang, a lay member of the Presbyterian Church, resident in Dublin, was chosen "to manage both receiving and distributing" the money. Mr. Lang was agent for nearly half a century. He died towards the end of the year 1788. The Rev. Robert Black of Derry was then elected agent.

<sup>11</sup> In 1697, it was agreed that two quarterly payments of the Royal Bounty should be made to the widow and family of a minister after his decease. In 1717, the synod resolved to pay to them, "during the vacancy of the congregation," the proportion of the grant which the minister had previously enjoyed. In the same year, every minister engaged to pay "yearly five thirteens at least" (5s. 5d.) towards the support of a widow's fund. These contributions do not appear to have been regularly transmitted to the treasurer, and the complaints of widows were soon as distressing as before. When the subject was brought under the notice of the synod in 1745, each minister promised to subscribe something "for the support of widows who are very poor, and proper objects of charity." On the strength of the fund thus raised, the synod declared, in 1748, that widows were "entitled to £4 per annum during

the synod established a fund, on a more permanent and extensive basis, for the benefit of the widows and families of its ministers. The originator of this institution was Mr. William Bruce, an elder of Wood Street congregation, Dublin.<sup>12</sup> Mr. Bruce was possessed of a benevolent, as well as of a highly cultivated mind, and as he was allied by birth to several of the Presbyterian ministers of Ulster, he was thus, doubtless, led to suggest the scheme with which his memory is now so honourably associated. Though he was connected with the non-subscribers, and though there had been little intercourse between that party and the synod of Ulster for nearly a quarter of a century, his character was so well known, and so highly appreciated, that when he appeared in Dungannon, at the annual meeting of 1750, to ex-

their widowhood, provided the presbytery where they reside recommend them." MS. Minutes of Synod.

<sup>12</sup> This gentleman has been already noticed in chap. xxvi., note 36. Shortly after his death, his friend, Mr. Gabriel Cornwall, published anonymously, "An Essay on the Character of the late Mr. William Bruce." It appears from this paper, and another tract by Dr. Hincks, that, after having completed his collegiate education, he engaged in business. He subsequently became tutor to the son of Mr. Henry, a Dublin banker, and, in company with this young gentleman, is said to have visited Cambridge, Oxford, and Glasgow, in pursuit of intellectual improvement. Nine or ten years before his death, he settled permanently in Dublin, and distinguished himself as a most useful and public spirited citizen. At a critical period, he is said to have contributed essentially to the prosperity of the linen manufacture. Mr. Cornwall states, that "the distinguished for abilities, power, fortune, and high rank, courted his friendship, nor could the shades of a private station prevent his virtues, unaided by wealth, or power, or place, from rising into very public observation." Alexander Stewart, Esq. (see note 5 of this chapter), was his intimate friend, and acted as his executor. Mr. Bruce, who was never married, died of fever in 1755, in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and was buried in the same tomb with his cousin, Francis Hutcheson, the well-known Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow. One of his brothers, the Rev. Michael Bruce of Holywood, who has been repeatedly mentioned in this history, was the great-grandfather of the Rev. Wm. Bruce of Belfast, late Professor of Greek in the Royal Academical Institution. Another of his brothers was the Rev. Patrick Bruce, minister, first of Drumbo, and then of Killileagh, grandfather of Sir H. H. A. Bruce of Downhill, near Coleraine, created a baronet of the United Kingdom in 1804.

pound his views upon this subject, he readily obtained a respectful and patient hearing. The synod at once acceded to the plan which he proposed, and trustees were appointed to take charge of the funds to be collected.<sup>13</sup> At the next annual meeting of synod he received "the thanks of the house for his care and zeal in projecting and carrying on the scheme."

It is not here necessary to enter into a detailed account of the institution now popularly known as "The Widows' Fund," but the outlines of the original plan may be briefly described. Every minister was required to contribute two pounds annually, that his widow, at his decease, might be entitled to an endowment of twelve pounds a year. Should he leave children and no widow, or should the widow die soon after himself, the family were to enjoy the endowment, either for the entire term of eight years, reckoned from his decease, or for the residue of that term which remained after the death of the widow. The annuity was to be raised as soon as the state of the fund would permit. Many of the laity of the Presbyterian Church warmly approved of this scheme, and the contributions of the ministers were soon largely supplemented by bequests, subscriptions, and congregational collections.<sup>14</sup> All these helps were absolutely necessary to place

<sup>13</sup> The first trustees were Alexander Stewart, Esq., an elder of Wood Street congregation; William Lennox, Esq., also an elder of Wood Street congregation; Alderman James Dunn, an elder of Cook Street congregation; Doctor George Martin, an elder of Capel Street congregation; Doctor George Machonchy, and the Rev. Robert M'Master, one of the ministers of Usher's Quay congregation, all of the city of Dublin. Mr. Stewart, about this time, removed to Newtownards. See note 5 of this chapter.

<sup>14</sup> Mr. M'Kedy of Ballymena bequeathed the first legacy paid into the fund. It amounted to £50, and was paid in 1753. In the following years the following additional legacies were paid:—In 1754, from Mrs. Wilson, Tully, county Longford, £66, 13s. 4d.; in 1764, from Mr. Patrick Adair, London, £50; in 1768, from Mr. Edmonstone, Redhall, Broadisland, £100; in 1769, from Mrs. Empson, £200; in 1776, from Mr. Armstrong, Belfast, £500; in 1780, from Dr. Machonchy, one of the original trustees, £100; in 1785, a legacy, as it would appear, from a lady in Dublin, per Mr. Gabriel Cornwall, £200; in 1809, a legacy of one hundred guineas from Counsellor Andrew Caldwell of Dublin. In 1754, the congregational collections amounted, in all, to £888, 14s. 1½d. For several years these collections were taken up

the institution upon a satisfactory foundation ; and had it not been so generously supported, it would, to a considerable extent, have failed to realise the advantages which its projector anticipated. To many, "The Widows' Fund" holds out inducements such as no ordinary insurance company presents, for it admits individuals to its privileges irrespective of their age, or state of health, or constitutional tendencies ; but this peculiarity of its structure increases the difficulty of applying to it any well-ascertained principles of reckoning ; and as the whole subject of life assurance was but imperfectly understood at the time of its establishment, it is not strange that some of the data on which Mr. Bruce based his calculations at length proved to be fallacious. It was discovered that the widows to be relieved greatly exceeded the supposed number,<sup>15</sup> and, in consequence, it was found necessary to reduce the annuities. This reduction was, however, only temporary ; the institution gradually gained strength, and at present it yields more than triple the endowment originally contemplated.<sup>16</sup>

It has been stated, in the preceding chapter, that various members of the General Synod had recently manifested an anxiety to bring about a reconciliation with the presbytery of Antrim. Their efforts had hitherto proved abortive, but the establishment of this fund presented another and a very favourable opportunity for their renewal. Mr. Bruce had laid the members of synod

annually. William Adair, Esq., son of the Rev. Patrick Adair, minister of Carrickfergus, paid for many years a subscription of £10 annually. The same gentleman, who died in 1782, bequeathed £2000 to the Adairs, the proprietors of the Ballymena estate, in trust for the benefit of the poor free-men of Carrickfergus.

<sup>15</sup> In 1759, it was ascertained that the ministers' widows, then living, amounted to seventy-four. It would seem that they had been computed at scarcely half that number.

<sup>16</sup> Each widow now receives yearly £34, present currency ; and when a minister dies, leaving a family and no widow, the children receive the annuity for ten years. In addition to an annual subscription of £2, the contributor now pays the whole of his Regium Donum for the first year. There is at present an accumulated capital of upwards of £50,000. In 1852, the society was incorporated by act of parliament, the 15th of Victoria, chap. 112.



under weighty obligations by his generous labours in their service, and as his scheme was of a purely secular character, no plausible reason could be well given why his friends, the non-subscribers, should be excluded from its benefits. On other grounds, their co-operation was obviously desirable, as some of their congregations were among the richest and most liberal in the country, and it was therefore to be expected that their contributions would materially aid in giving stability to the institution. It was accordingly agreed that the presbytery of Antrim should be invited "to join in this scheme."<sup>17</sup> The non-subscribers were not backward to accede to this request; and they did not confine their representatives to the consideration of the specific subject mentioned in the invitation, for, at the annual meeting of 1751, a commission was presented to the synod, empowering the Rev. Messrs. John Henderson, Alexander Colville, John Elder, Alexander Maclaine, Clotworthy Brown, John Beatty, John Marshal, and William Nevin,<sup>18</sup> to attend the synod, and "to confer about matters of public concern."<sup>19</sup>

About this time the advocates of moderatism established their ascendancy in the synod of Ulster. They had been long struggling against the votes of orthodox majorities, but agencies had meanwhile been silently in operation, which eventually secured for them a paramount influence. Of these, the most important was the collegiate education received by candidates for the mi-

<sup>17</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod for 1750.

<sup>18</sup> The Rev. John Henderson was minister of Dunean. He died in January 1753. The Rev. Alexander Colville of Dromore has been already noticed in this history (see chap. xxv., note 115, and the text), as has also the Rev. John Elder of Aghadoe. (See chap. xxv. and xxvi.) The Rev. Alexander Maclaine was minister of Antrim. He died in January 1759. He was the brother of the Rev. Thomas Maclaine of Monaghan, and the uncle of the translator of Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History." The Rev. Clotworthy Brown was minister of Ballynure, and afterwards the colleague of Mr. Drennan, and one of the ministers of the 1st congregation, Belfast. The Rev. John Beatty was minister of Holywood, where he died in 1794. The Rev. John Marshal was minister of Ballyclare, and the Rev. William Nevin of Downpatrick.

<sup>19</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod for 1751.

nistry. Professor Simpson of Glasgow had inoculated his students with those principles which led to the separation of the presbytery of Antrim; and so remiss were the judicatories of the Church of Scotland, that even after the mischievous character of his teaching had been fully demonstrated, he was permitted, year after year, to continue his theological prelections. When set aside in 1729, others, holding sentiments scarcely less dangerous, still occupied chairs of divinity in the Scottish colleges. Dr. William Hamilton, Professor of Theology in Edinburgh, was a zealous moderate, who contrived to train up a race of heterodox ministers, by maintaining an ominous silence in reference to various doctrines of the Gospel.<sup>20</sup> Dr. John Goudy, who succeeded him in 1733, was a man of kindred spirit, though of inferior ability. But of all those who filled chairs in the Scottish universities during the first half of the eighteenth century, no one was more influential in moulding the minds of young men preparing for the sacred office than Dr. Francis Hutcheson, Professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow. This gentleman, who, as already stated,<sup>21</sup> was the son of the minister of Armagh, had, at an early period of life, relinquished the principles of his amiable and excellent father. Though possessed of great natural eloquence, he was not generally acceptable as a preacher in the North of Ireland, for he proclaimed "another Gospel," which the pious Presbyterians of Ulster utterly disowned.<sup>22</sup> When he had

<sup>20</sup> See "Life of Dr. Leechman," prefixed to his "Sermons," vol. i. p. 4; also Wodrow's "Analecta," vol. iv. pp. 139, 140.

<sup>21</sup> See chap. xxv., note 5.

<sup>22</sup> His license as a probationer is reported in the MS. Minutes of the Synod for 1719. When he preached on one occasion in his father's pulpit, his doctrine was so much disliked, that the whole congregation, with the exception of the precentor and two other persons, abruptly left the meeting-house. The story is thus related by the historian of the primatial city:—"At Armagh, his father, who laboured under a slight rheumatic affection, deputed him to preach in his place on a cold and rainy Sunday. About two hours after Francis had left Ballyrea (his father's residence), the rain abated—the sun shone forth—the day became serene and warm—and Mr. Hutcheson, who found his spirits exhilarated by the change, felt anxious to collect the opinions of his congregation on the merits of his favourite son, and proceeded directly to the city.

travelled about for some time as a licentiate, he was invited to become the pastor of a small congregation; but some of his friends in Dublin, who were acquainted with his talents and attainments, and who were unwilling that he should settle down in a sphere so unpromising and uncongenial, encouraged him to open an academy in the Irish metropolis.<sup>23</sup> This seminary, in which several of the higher branches of education were taught, soon acquired considerable celebrity; and as the fascinating manners of its president, as well as his most remarkable powers of conversation, rendered him peculiarly attractive, his society was cultivated by persons of rank and refinement. Some time after his settlement in Dublin, he became intimately acquainted with Lord Molesworth; and his "Enquiry into the Ideas of Beauty and Virtue," recommended him to the notice of Archbishop King, Primate Boulter, and Lord Granville, the lord-lieutenant. His residence in the Irish capital does not appear to have increased his attachment either to evangelical truth or to Presbyterian discipline; for when a report reached his father that he had adopted strange sentiments, and that he was about to conform to the Episcopal Establishment, and when the good old minister wrote him a letter of remonstrance, he replied very coolly, that "to have singular opinions on some points is either innocent in many cases or a pardonable weakness," and that "separation from the Church" seemed to him "only a point of prudence." "I would not," he added, "blame any man of my own principles

How was he astonished and chagrined when he met almost the whole of his flock coming from the meeting-house, with strong marks of disappointment and disgust visible in their countenances. One of the elders, a native of Scotland, addressed the surprised and deeply mortified father thus—"We a' feel muckle wae for your mishap, reverend sir; but it cannot be concealed. Your silly son, Frank, has fashed a' the congregation wi' his idle cackle; for he has been babbling this oor about a gude and benevolent God, and that the souls of the heathens themselfs will gang to heeven, if they follow the licht o' their ain consciences. Not a word does the daft boy ken, speer, nor say about the gude, auld, comfortable doctrines of election, reprobation, original sin, and faith. Hoot, man, awa' wi' sic a fellow." Stuart's "Armagh," pp. 488, 489.

<sup>23</sup> "Life," by Leechman, prefixed to his "Moral Philosophy," vol. i. p. 6.

who, *for very important purposes*, did conform."<sup>24</sup> The reasons which he assigns for this strange conclusion are exceedingly frivolous, and the whole answer is written in a strain which indicates how far his mind was now perverted by the speculations of a false philosophy.

Mr. Hutcheson speedily acquired such celebrity, that, towards the end of the year 1729, he was invited to become Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow. Though the works which he had already published entitled him to take a high place among elegant and accomplished writers, they contained several very questionable sentiments; and as, in his new office, he was to enter into discussions of a theological character, his appointment gave some uneasiness to the friends of orthodoxy.<sup>25</sup> But Mr. Hutcheson was a man of consummate prudence and address; and whilst his grave and conciliatory deportment secured for him the respect and esteem of all sections of the Church, his fame as a professor greatly increased the attendance at the university. He was the first who introduced the custom of lecturing in English into that ancient seat of learning;<sup>26</sup> and no doubt his use of the vernacular tongue contributed much to the popularity of his philosophical dissertations. His reputation stood higher than that of any other professor of mental philosophy in the British Isles, and

<sup>24</sup> The letter may be found at length in the "Christian Moderator," vol. ii. pp. 350-53.

<sup>25</sup> Family connections had some influence in this appointment. Wodrow states, that "the Laird of Dunlop," the Lord-Rector of the university, had recently "married his (Mr. Hutcheson's) aunt's daughter." ("Analecta," vol. iv. p. 99.) When Dr. Calamy, the English nonconformist, heard of his election, he said, "that he was not for Scotland, as he thought from his book; that he would be reckoned there *as unorthodox as Mr. Simpson*" (the Arian professor.) "Analecta," vol. iv., p. 227. "The book" to which Calamy here refers was, no doubt, his "Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions," shortly before published.

<sup>26</sup> "Life of Leechman," prefixed to his "Sermons," vol. i. p. 28. The lectures had before been delivered in Latin. A pamphlet which he wrote a few years after his election, in favour of the abolition of patronage, probably contributed to maintain a good understanding between the professor and the evangelical party in the Church of Scotland.



students flocked to his class, not only from all parts of Scotland, but also from England and from Ireland.

Whilst Dr. Hutcheson's audiences in the University of Glasgow were dazzled and delighted with his eloquent prelections, they were at the same time taught an ethical system which by no means harmonised with the peculiar doctrines of revelation. Though the professor was a man of taste and genius, and though he deserves credit for checking that tendency to open licentiousness which characterised the philosophy of his age, his own spirit was decidedly anti-evangelical. By representing virtue as consisting in benevolence, he at once subverted the claims of acts of humility and justice, and exalted mere emotions into a position of undue importance. It would follow from his theory that those who are distinguished by the warmth of their affections, or by their natural amiability of disposition, are alone "the excellent of the earth." A man sins, according to Dr. Hutcheson, simply when he fails to maintain aright the balance of his affections; and their proper adjustment, in the opinion of this writer, is an affair of little difficulty. His scheme throughout is so complimentary to human nature, as almost to supersede the necessity of an atonement and a Saviour; and though its author professed his regard for revelation, it is clear that he must have formed a very low idea of the blessings of the Gospel; as, when pointing out what he considers the true method of obtaining peace of conscience, he expresses himself in the style of a stoical philosopher. "We can," says he, "give secure tranquillity to our souls by an entire confidence in the perfections of God, and resignation to his providence."<sup>27</sup>

Dr. Hutcheson's exaggerated estimate of natural conscience is another great defect in his philosophical system. When he describes, as a "part of our nature," what he calls "a moral sense," which "immediately approves all moral excellence and determines the soul to the love of it,"<sup>28</sup> he gives quite too favourable an account of the condition of our fallen humanity; for, as a

<sup>27</sup> "Moral Philosophy," vol. i. p. 213.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, vol. i. pp. 209, 210. His friend and biographer, Leechman, who seems to have adopted his views, thus describes his theory—"The moral sense is *always* so far true to its office, that it *never fails* to give

weak eye may be blinded by the purest light, so "natural conscience" may fail to recognise the highest manifestations of moral excellence. When He who was "altogether lovely" appeared on earth, this moral sense could discern in him "no form nor comeliness." There were, indeed, occasions on which the consciences of men were constrained to render reluctant homage to the surpassing excellence of "the Holy One of God;" but still the great fact cannot be disputed, that "the world knew him not," and that they only who were "born from above" could discern "his glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." Conscience is, indeed, a noble remnant of the wreck of our moral nature; but as the statements of Dr. Hutcheson indicate that its sensibility and strength have not been in any way affected by the fall, they are contradicted by experience.

Whilst the ethical system taught in Glasgow served to flatter the pride of human nature, it was also calculated to deceive men as to their state in the sight of God. But Dr. Hutcheson was honoured as the master-spirit of the university; and the lectures of a professor so gifted, and so enthusiastically devoted to his theory, must have made a deep impression upon the susceptible minds of youthful candidates for the ministry. It was not merely, however, in his capacity as professor of moral philosophy that Dr. Hutcheson attempted to bias the judgments of his students. He contrived to interfere still more directly with the formation of their theological sentiments. "He gave," says his biographer, "a weekly lecture on the Sunday evening on the truth and excellency of Christianity. . . . He was especially solicitous to be serviceable to the students of divinity, endeavouring, among other important instructions, to give them just notions of the main design of preaching."<sup>29</sup> The candidates for the ministerial office could scarcely have been exposed to the influence of a more insinuating, and, at the same time, a more dangerous teacher. He condemned doctrinal preaching, encouraged his pupils to prophesy "smooth

*the highest and warmest approbation to every instance of truly disinterested virtue.*" "Life," p. 18. Compare this with 1 Cor. ii. 14.

<sup>29</sup> "Life," by Leechman, prefixed to his "System of Moral Philosophy," pp. 36 and 38.

things," and, by many cautious hints, signified his disapproval of the Westminster formularies.<sup>30</sup>

Dr. Witherspoon, who was one of the most sagacious of his contemporaries, has not hesitated to represent Dr. Hutcheson as the great promoter of that formal and heartless religion which prevailed so extensively in Scotland about the middle of the last century. In his "Ecclesiastical Characteristics," he describes his doctrine, "that virtue is founded upon instinct and affection," as "the scheme of philosophy upon which" his "generation" was "formed." In his own jocose style, Witherspoon ridicules the zeal of "every boy of sixteen in a certain university" in favour of "the moral sense;" and in a catalogue of the books "which will make a truly learned moderate man," he takes care to enrol "all Mr. Hutcheson's pieces."<sup>31</sup> In this satirical production he has

<sup>30</sup> "High speculations *on disputable points* of theology, he (Hutcheson) looked upon as altogether improper for the pulpit." ("Life," p. 38.) In the language of Scottish moderatism, this statement implies that he did not wish his students in their sermons to treat of the Trinity, original sin, the sovereignty of grace, or justification by faith alone. "The general plan of preaching which he recommended was to this purpose: as mankind are weak, ignorant, guilty creatures [that is, not perfectly innocent], altogether insufficient for their own happiness, and every moment exposed to many unavoidable calamities, let them be called upon to *reflect upon themselves as such*, and let those doctrines of natural and revealed religion, which will impart consolation to them under these humbling views of themselves, be set before them in the strongest light." ("Life," p. 39.) His biographer adds, that he took his views of doctrines, "not from *the party tenets or scholastic systems of modern ages*." ("Life," p. 36.) Of course the Confession of Faith was treated with little ceremony. It has been already stated, that Dr. Hutcheson and his cousin, Mr. William Bruce, were buried in the same tomb, and Mr. Gabriel Cornwall, who was the friend of both, and who was doubtless well acquainted with their religious sentiments, wrote for them a common epitaph, which is still preserved. In this memorial he represents them as "laying little stress on those *statements of opinions* (probably meaning *articles of faith*), than which there never was a greater pest or one more injurious to piety." ("Notices of Wm. Bruce," by Dr. Hincks, pp. 4, 5.) It is certain that Mr. William Bruce held very loose views on various religious subjects. Thus, he says, in one of his extant letters—"How men came so universally to *annex the ideas of inspiration to all that is now contained in the New Testament* it is not easy to guess." "Notices," by Dr. Hincks, p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> Shortly after his removal to Glasgow, he obtained a doctor's degree;

many other very marked allusions to the Professor of Moral Philosophy in the College of Glasgow.

Had the colleagues of Dr. Hutcheson, who occupied the strictly theological chairs, been able and zealous advocates of evangelical truth, they might, to a considerable extent, have counteracted the influence of his philosophical prelections. But unhappily they were men of kindred principles. Of the professors who succeeded Mr. Simpson in the chair of Systematic Divinity, some were quite inefficient, and others positively heterodox. Dr. William Leechman, who was appointed to the situation in 1743, was arraigned soon afterwards for heresy by the presbytery of Glasgow, and had not moderatism at the time been rampant in the Church, he would have found it difficult to escape from the accusation.<sup>32</sup> There is strong reason to suspect that this professor was at heart a Unitarian, for the most heterodox of the English nonconformists, such as Dr. Lardner, Dr. Price, and Dr. Taylor of Norwich, were his favourite correspondents, and the men whom he most delighted to honour.<sup>33</sup> Though he filled the

but even after his death he continued to be known as *Mr. Hutcheson*. (See his correspondence with Mr. Gilbert Burnet, published in Glasgow in 1772.) He died about seven years before the publication of "Witherspoon's Characteristics." He is accordingly spoken of there as "the late immortal Mr. Hutcheson.

<sup>32</sup> This gentleman, some time before his election to the professorship, received a call from one of the non-subscribing congregations in Belfast. He was probably recommended by Dr. Hutcheson, who kept up a constant correspondence with his friends in Ulster. It is, at all events, certain that Dr. Hutcheson advised him to accept the offer. ("Life of Leechman," prefixed to his "Sermons," p. 18.) Dr. Hutcheson used all his influence to secure the election of Leechman as professor of divinity. He was chosen by the casting vote of the lord-rector. The Rev. John MacLaurin of Glasgow was the rival candidate.

<sup>33</sup> The manner in which his friend and biographer, the Rev. Dr. James Wodrow, speaks of his intercourse with the author of the treatise on "Original Sin," is full of meaning. "He spent a Sunday at Warrington with the late Dr. Taylor, then at the head of that academy; the first time, I imagine, those *two kindred souls* had the pleasure of meeting; but they were no strangers to one another, as they corresponded by letters, and the *University of Glasgow* had sent the Warrington professor his *degree of Doctor in Divinity*." "Life," pp. 74, 75.



office seventeen years, he deemed it prudent all that time to refrain from any explanation of his own religious principles. "No decisive judgment, *on any great controverted point*, was ever delivered," says his admiring biographer, "from that theological chair. After the point had undergone a full discussion, none of the students yet knew the particular opinion of this venerable professor."<sup>34</sup>

The theological training to which Irish students were subjected in the University of Glasgow accounts, to a great extent, for the steady progress and ultimate ascendancy of New-Light principles in the synod of Ulster. The orthodox majority endeavoured to exclude error, by passing resolution after resolution enforcing subscription to the Westminster formulary; but the moderate party did not deem it necessary to excite public alarm by opposing these impotent arrangements, for they knew that the attendance of the candidates for the ministry on the lectures of the Scottish professors would silently accomplish a theological revolution. It was apparent to all that the number of evangelical preachers was annually declining, and many of the people passed over to the ranks of the secession because they were dissatisfied with what they called "the young fry" of the pastors of the General Synod; but, meanwhile, no attempt was made to purify the ministry by making provision for a more satisfactory system of theological education. It may be that the synod felt itself incompetent to grapple with the difficulties of so weighty an undertaking. Meanwhile the evil advanced apace, and in little more than a quarter of a century after the separation of the presbytery of Antrim, the New-Light party had a complete preponderance of influence and talent in the synod of Ulster.

But whilst the moderatism of the Scottish colleges exercised a powerful influence upon Irish Presbyterianism, there were other causes which contributed to promote its deterioration. Among these, the wretched condition of the Episcopal Church cannot be passed over unnoticed. About the middle of the last century, the English establishment presented a most melancholy spectacle

<sup>34</sup> "Life," p. 34.

to the eye of the spiritual observer. Her articles were openly assailed by those appointed to explain and recommend them, and many of her nominal adherents were sunk in infidelity. Some of the occupants of the Episcopal bench were "known to be no friends to the Athanasian doctrine,"<sup>35</sup> and one of these right reverend dignitaries had openly declared that he was acquainted with no more proper book "than Taylor 'On Original Sin' to settle the principles of a young clergyman."<sup>36</sup> The Established Church of Ireland was in no better condition. There was not one active minister in every county who preached evangelical doctrine,<sup>37</sup> and scarcely one bishop could be named who laboured to promote the spiritual interests of his diocese.<sup>38</sup> The primate, Dr. George Stone, a man of great talents and of unbounded ambition, was completely immersed in politics; and according to the testimony of a respectable historian, who was a minister of his own communion, was so bent on the maintenance of his party,

<sup>35</sup> "Monthly Review" for 1755, vol. xii. p. 434. Bishop Hoadly, in his account of the "Life, Character, and Writings of Dr. Samuel Clark," the celebrated Arian, speaks of that divine as "a benefactor to the cause of religion." Hare, bishop of Chichester, who died in 1740, was suspected of infidelity. One of his works, "The Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the study of the Scriptures in the way of private judgment," sustains this suspicion.

<sup>36</sup> "Wesley's Doctrine of Original Sin." Preface.

<sup>37</sup> "Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon," vol. ii. p. 148.

<sup>38</sup> A distinguished minister of the Established Church, who lived at this period, has furnished the following account of an advice given by an Irish bishop, after dinner, on the day of an ordination, to those whom he had just admitted into the sacred office:—"You may think that good preaching will make you agreeable to your people, but here I must tell you, you are quite mistaken: it is not for this they'll like you; but I'll teach you a method of gaining all their favours. Look out for some humorous jest-book, and pick out all the droll stories you meet with in it, and get them by heart. Then if you be able, make up some new ones of your own. Take care, also, to recollect every witty thing you hear in company, and fix it in your memory. Thus equipped, you will be well qualified to do the duties of the parish. For when you go to christenings, marriages, or *wakes*, you may easily entertain every one present by your witty jokes and droll stories, so that your company will be sought for over the whole parish." Burdy's "Life of Skelton," p. 31.

that he sacrificed religion and morality, in the most abominable manner, that he might gain and confirm adherents.<sup>39</sup> Several of the inferior clergy held Arian sentiments; and at least one dignitary, who wore an Irish mitre for nearly thirty years, was an avowed and zealous Unitarian. This distinguished Churchman, the Right Reverend Dr. Robert Clayton, was successively bishop of Killala, of Cork and Ross, and of Clogher. Through the influence of Caroline, the queen of George II., he was promoted to his first bishopric in January 1730; but he had previously embraced the Arian hypothesis, and not long afterwards he took occasion publicly to indicate his theological predilections. In a sermon preached before the lord-lieutenant, on the 30th of January 1732, he denounced the "Lambeth Articles," drawn up to check the progress of Arminianism, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, by Archbishop Whitgift, and other eminent divines of the Church of England, as "the most absurd that ever were framed by rational creatures."<sup>40</sup> His patroness, Queen Caroline, was well known to entertain rather loose notions in regard to Christianity; but, in this same discourse, Bishop Clayton describes her as a princess "whose religion is founded upon *reason*, the only sure basis for reasonable creatures to proceed upon, and whose understanding is equally elevated with the station she possesses."<sup>41</sup> Though, however, he never seems to have concealed his views on the question of the Trinity, he did not formally attack the established creed through the medium of the press until the year 1751.

<sup>39</sup> Gordon's "History of Ireland," vol. ii. p. 220. I think it unnecessary to enter more minutely into the disgusting details mentioned by this writer. Another minister of the same Church confirms the statements of Gordon. See Burdy's "History of Ireland," p. 390.

<sup>40</sup> This sermon, for which the author received the thanks of the lords spiritual and temporal, was published by the special command of his grace the Duke of Dorset, the lord-lieutenant of Ireland. The quotations given in the text are taken from pp. 12 and 18.

<sup>41</sup> Lord Chesterfield, who was well acquainted with this princess, gives the following account of her religion:—"After puzzling herself in all the whimsies and fantastical speculations of different sects, she fixed ultimately in Deism, believing in a future state." Chesterfield's "Miscellaneous Works," vol. i. p. 346.

The famous "Essay on Spirit"<sup>42</sup> then made its appearance, and soon passed through two or three editions. It is said that this essay was written, not by Dr. Clayton himself, but by one of the young ministers of his diocese who had imbibed his sentiments. The bishop, however, adopted the work, and furnished a dedication, addressed to the primate of all Ireland.

This "Essay on Spirit" was the most remarkable treatise in support of Arianism published by any Irish Protestant minister since the time of the Reformation. As its reputed author was a prelate officially connected with the northern province, it was perused with avidity by ministers of the synod of Ulster, and it unsettled the minds of some who had before been but superficially acquainted with the Trinitarian controversy.<sup>43</sup> Nor was this the only instance in which error crept in among the northern Presbyterians through the medium of the Irish establishment. Seve-

<sup>42</sup> The following is the full title :—" An Essay on Spirit, wherein the doctrine of the Trinity is considered in the light of reason and nature, as well as in the light in which it was held by the ancient Hebrews, compared also with the doctrine of the Old and New Testament ; with an Enquiry into the Sentiments of the primitive fathers of the Church, and the doctrine of the Trinity as maintained by the Egyptians, Pythagoreans, and Platonists, together with some remarks on the Athanasian and Nicene creeds." This publication gave rise to a lengthened controversy, in which M'Donnel, Jones (the author of the well-known work on the "Trinity,") and others took part. Bishop Clayton afterwards attacked the doctrine of the Trinity in other publications. On February 2, 1756, he made a motion in the Irish House of Lords with a view to the exclusion of the Athanasian and Nicene creeds from the Book of Common Prayer. The motion was negatived, only four voting for it, and twenty-six against it. It was vehemently opposed by Stone, the primate. Even after this bold attack on the established formularies, no attempt was made to bring him under ecclesiastical censure ; but having again, in 1757, assailed the doctrine of the supreme Deity of our Lord in another publication, the king was advised to order the lord-licutenant of Ireland to institute legal proceedings. The notification of the contemplated process threw him into a nervous fever, of which he died on the 26th February 1758. "Mant," vol. ii. p. 617.

<sup>43</sup> Semple of Anahilt, writing in 1754, speaks of the "Essay on Spirit" as a "dangerous book." (The "Survey Impartially Examined," p. 68.) Dr. Kippis states, that "the 'Essay on Spirit,' and the tracts on the same side of the question, were the means of diffusing the Arian opinions." "Biog. Britan.," art. Clayton.



ral of the ministers of the synod of Ulster were now living on terms of agreeable intercourse with the Episcopal clergy, and the latter occasionally contrived, by means of this friendly correspondence, to disseminate their pernicious principles.<sup>44</sup>

Though, at first sight, the establishment of the Widows' Fund may appear to have no connection with the advancement or decline of orthodoxy, it forms, in fact, an important era in the religious history of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. From this date New-Light principles were disseminated in the synod of Ulster with greater zeal, and were avowed by its ministers with greater boldness. Their increased intercourse with the non-subscribers contributed to this result. The theology of all the ministers of the presbytery of Antrim was essentially anti-evangelical; and as their common interest in the Widows' Fund led them henceforth to attend the annual meetings of the synod, their very presence exercised a considerable influence; for, when not permitted to deliberate and vote, they could secretly supply information and give counsel; and no doubt, in cases of emergency, they often awakened the zeal and stimulated the courage of those members of the synod who cherished kindred sentiments.

From the period before us, the growth of New-Light principles in the General Synod was extensive and rapid. Most of the sermons published by ministers of the body, for many years after this date, are evidently the productions of men who had very incorrect views of the way of salvation. The members of synod who henceforth took the most prominent part in the management of its affairs, including those commonly chosen to officiate as moderators, repudiated the Calvinistic theology. As error generally makes its advances by stealth, they seldom, in their public services, directly assailed doctrines which the people had been long accustomed to cherish and uphold; but, though they had all signed the Westminster Confession, they were prepared

<sup>44</sup> The Rev. John Cameron of Dunluce, one of the most zealous propagators of heterodoxy in the synod of Ulster during the latter half of the eighteenth century, was himself originally perverted by a neighbouring Episcopal clergyman. See preface to his doctrine "Concerning the only true God," pp. 7, 8. London, 1828.

to plead that they were not thus, for all time to come, bound to adhere to everything it contained. The arrival of the Seceders had arrested the progress of moderatism; and from their first appearance in the North of Ireland, the supreme court of the Presbyterian Church in Ulster had, year after year, been passing resolutions indicative of zeal for orthodoxy; but the excitement created by these Scottish preachers was now beginning somewhat to subside, and it soon appeared that they had rather alarmed than improved the existing ministry. When it was discovered that they were joined chiefly by the poor, and that it was in vain to attempt to prevent their settlement in the country, the members of the synod affected to treat them with contempt, and resolved to submit with as much equanimity as possible to the annoyance of such uncomfortable fellow-labourers. The act of 1749, enjoining subscription to the Confession of Faith, seems to have exhausted their concern for the maintenance of pure doctrine, as, for upwards of thirty years afterwards, the frequent evasion of the law was not even once made the subject of any resolution to be found in the records of their proceedings.

Whilst the synod of Ulster was thus rapidly conforming to the spirit and sentiments of a degenerate age, the Seceders were steadily going forward with the settlement of their newly-erected congregations. On the 11th of April 1750, the Rev. Alexander Stewart was ordained, by the Antiburgher Presbytery of Glasgow, to the pastoral charge of the congregation of Drumachose. This minister entered upon his labours under very encouraging circumstances, as his call was signed by no less than two hundred and forty-two persons. On the day following that of his ordination, the first Associate Presbytery established in Ireland, consisting of Messrs. Patton, Arrott, and Stewart,<sup>45</sup> was constituted at Arkilly, near Newtownlimavady. Shortly afterwards, Mr. John Tennent, a probationer of the Antiburgher Presbytery of Edinburgh, received a call from the Seceders of Ballyrashane, Derrykeighan, and Roseyards, signed by two hundred

<sup>45</sup> Dr. M'Kerrow has here fallen into a slight mistake. He represents Mr. Tennent as a member of the presbytery "at its formation," (p. 257 note), whereas that minister was not ordained for upwards of a year afterwards.

and twenty-one persons. The ordination of Mr. Tennent<sup>46</sup> took place on the 16th of May 1751. In the year succeeding, the presbytery gained two other accessions. In the spring of 1752, the Rev. James Hume was ordained minister of the seceding congregation of Moira and Lisburn, and about the same time the Rev. Robert Reid<sup>47</sup> was invested with the pastoral oversight of a numerous flock at Ray, in the county of Donegal. The next year added another member to what was now called "The Associate Presbytery of Ireland," as, in August 1753, the Rev. James Martin was ordained over a congregation collected in the neighbourhood of Bangor.<sup>48</sup>

Whilst the Antiburghers were thus extending their influence, the Burghers were not less zealous, energetic, and prosperous. The apathy of the synod of Ulster greatly promoted their success. One of the most decided symptoms of the decline of religion in that body appeared in its increasing reluctance to sanction the erection of new congregations. In estimating the motives which dictated this unwise and unaccommodating policy, we cannot altogether overlook the ignoble suggestions of self-interest. Whilst every new erection added to the shareholders of Royal Bounty and diminished the dividend of each recipient, it also subtracted families from various surrounding congregations, and thus affected the stipends of a number of ministers. In better times, the members of the synod would have ignored such considerations; and when the Church was enlarged under the diligent preaching of the Word, a grateful people would have made up to a faithful minister any deficiency of income created

<sup>46</sup> Mr. Tennent died in 1808. During a ministry of fifty-seven years, he was never prevented from preaching, by sickness or otherwise, for a single Sabbath. Robert James Tennent, Esq., late M.P. for Belfast, is his grandson, and Sir James Emerson Tennent, late M.P. for Lisburn, and now one of the secretaries of the Board of Trade, is married to his grand-daughter.

<sup>47</sup> The Rev. Dr. Rentoul, the present minister of 2d Ray, is the grandson of Mr. Reid.

<sup>48</sup> The original meeting-house was at Conlig, but the situation was found to be inconvenient, and a place of worship was subsequently erected at Newtownards for the accommodation of the congregation. At a subsequent period, the Covenanters occupied the Conlig meeting-house. It is now a ruin.

by the withdrawal of a portion of his overgrown flock; but now the love of many had waxed cold, and the spirit of parsimony was often most ingloriously exhibited by both ministers and congregations. The unwillingness of the synod of Ulster to foster new erections introduced the secession into several districts. The people of Clennanees, a place nearly six miles from Aughnacloy, had long felt the inconvenience of their distance from a house of worship, and, with the concurrence of the presbytery of Monaghan, had erected, about the year 1744, a very humble mud building, where they were to meet every third Sabbath, and to be supplied with religious ordinances. This station was, however, soon neglected, and, in consequence, commissioners were sent to the synod, at its annual meeting in 1748, to complain that, for several months before, no minister had preached to the congregation. This representation probably produced greater regularity, but on one occasion, some time afterwards, an individual, who was extremely unacceptable, was appointed to officiate; and his services gave so much offence, that the people were now prepared for breaking up their connection with the synod of Ulster. A Seceder from Ballibay happened to visit his relations at Clennanees when matters were in this critical position, and, at his suggestion, an associate minister was soon afterwards requested to preach in the neighbourhood. The sermon delivered in consequence of this invitation gave much satisfaction to the auditory, and led to the establishment of a Burgher congregation. The introduction of the Seceders to Newbliss originated in circumstances of a somewhat different character. The presbytery of Monaghan had erected the people of the district into a separate worshipping society, but two of the neighbouring congregations strenuously objected to the appointment of a minister in that locality, and memorialled the annual meeting of synod in 1751, with a view to set aside the arrangement. Their opposition was successful, and the new congregation was dissolved. This proceeding was exceedingly discouraging to the Presbyterians of Newbliss; but still unwilling to relinquish the prospect of having a minister of their own, they petitioned the next meeting of synod for a reversal of the decision. Even when this application



failed, they were not altogether disheartened, for their commissioners again appeared before the synod in 1753, and urged a review of the previous deliverance. Robert Ker, Esq., a resident landed proprietor, now came forward as one of their representatives, and offered security for the payment of an annual stipend, then considered of competent amount.<sup>49</sup> Notwithstanding this proposal, the motion for the erection of the congregation was negatived by a large majority. The people now applied to the Seceders, and were immediately furnished with the required supply of ordinances. About the same time, the Burghers erected two other congregations, one at Castleblayney,<sup>50</sup> and another at Loughaghery.<sup>51</sup>

The Seceders were at first unable to meet all the applications made to them for preaching, but this difficulty was gradually removed, and their Irish congregations were, one after another, supplied with ministers. On the 23d of July 1751, Mr. Thomas Clark, a licentiate belonging to the Burgher Presbytery of Glasgow, was ordained to the pastoral charge of the congregation of Ballibay.

<sup>49</sup> It appears from the MS. Minutes of Synod, that the people of Newbliss, who were anxious for the new erection, amounted to "about fifty families," and that Mr. Ker offered "sufficient security" for the payment of a stipend of £40 per annum. At this same meeting of synod in 1753, it was agreed that "no minister be fixed in any congregation" not paying an annual stipend of £40, and "that it be earnestly recommended to the several congregations now planted, which do not pay yearly that sum, that they pay it yearly in time to come." The reason assigned for this rule is, that it is now "more difficult and expensive for the dissenting ministers to support themselves and families in a decent manner than it was some years ago, by reason of the dearth of provisions, servants, and lands." MS. Minutes of Synod.

<sup>50</sup> In August 1751, the Rev. James Gordon, who had been minister of Castleblayney, was installed as minister of the newly-erected congregation of Raphoe. Before his removal from Castleblayney, a portion of his flock had become dissatisfied, and had memorialled the synod in 1750 for a supply of preaching. Their application was unsuccessful, but the party still remained discontented; and, during the vacancy which soon followed, and which continued for about five years, the Seceders gathered a congregation.

<sup>51</sup> Loughaghery is about three miles from Hillsborough. The people joined the Seceders probably because, though far from a place of worship, the synod of Ulster would not erect them into a congregation.

A meeting-house had been previously erected, but, on the occasion of the ordination, it was insufficient to accommodate the assembled multitude, and the solemnity took place in the open air, in presence of a "vast confluence" of spectators. On the following day, the first Burgher presbytery formed in Ireland, consisting of Messrs. Black, Mayn, and Clark, was constituted on the same spot,<sup>52</sup> and designated the "Associate Presbytery of Down." The newly-erected judicatory had several vacancies under its care, and as it was without any licentiate of its own, it at first could scarcely overtake the demands upon its services. In May 1753, the synod at Glasgow sustained a call from Cennancess in favour of Mr. Hugh M'Gill; and, accordingly, about the commencement of the following year, he was ordained as minister of that congregation. The people of Newbliss, who had lately withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the synod of Ulster, now invited Mr. John Thomson to become their pastor; and, on the 24th of August 1754, he was set apart to the ministry among them, by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. In the July of the following year, the Rev. John M'Auley was invested with the pastoral care of the Seceders of Castleblayney and Derrynoose; and, about a month afterwards, the Rev. William Knox was ordained as minister of the Burgher congregation of Loughaghey.

Of all the seceding ministers originally settled in Ireland, none

<sup>52</sup> "William M'Kinley's field," where Mr. Clark was ordained, and where the presbytery of Down was constituted, has long been considered classic ground by Irish Seceders. The congregation, formerly called "the new erection" of Ballibay, is now known as the congregation of Cahans. Its present minister, the Rev. Matthew M'Auley, has kindly furnished me with the use of a very venerable record, from which I have gleaned some of the information here presented to the reader. The document to which I refer is a session book, which commences with the ministry of Mr. Clark, and a considerable part of which is in his own handwriting. This book contains a copy of the call presented to him, with the names of the subscribers, amounting to one hundred and ninety-nine. It appears from it that the ministers who officiated at his ordination were the Rev. Messrs. David Telfar, John M'Ara, Andrew Black, and Thomas Mayn. The commissioners from the congregation, who presented the call to the synod at Stirling, were John Nesbitt and Thomas Potts.

attracted so much public attention as the Rev. Thomas Clark of Ballibay. Mr. Clark was not particularly eloquent, and probably others of his brethren enjoyed greater popularity as preachers, but he was pre-eminently distinguished by his energy, his intrepidity, and his sufferings. In 1745, he had been chaplain in the family of a gentleman resident in Galloway, and he had signalled his loyalty in that eventful year by taking arms against the Pretender.<sup>53</sup> In June 1749, he was sent over to Ireland by the Burgher Presbytery of Glasgow to preach as a licentiate. He was most indefatigable in his labours; and as, for two years before his settlement at Ballibay, he itinerated throughout Monaghan, Tyrone, Armagh, and Down, he was generally known as a zealous associate missionary. He had preaching stations to supply in different parts of Ulster, so that he was obliged to travel on horseback; and if he could but hope to advance the great cause he had at heart, he was ready to proceed, on very short notice, to any distant town or county where he was invited to officiate. He rode along at a rather quick pace, as if he felt that he was engaged on a high errand; in almost every parish he had acquaintances, who furnished him from time to time with information respecting the condition of the people; and as he moved to and fro throughout the country, his appearance was sure to awaken suspicion and alarm in all who were either careless or New-Light ministers. He wore a Highland bonnet, and expressed himself in broad Scotch, and there was nothing, either in his dark visage or in his tall and gaunt figure, fitted to make any very favourable impression on a stranger; but those who entered into conversation with him were soon made sensible that they were holding fellowship with a minister of Christ. Though he used very homely language in his sermons, it was abundantly clear that he had the keys of the kingdom of heaven, for he knew how to reach the sinner's conscience, and to open the Scriptures,

<sup>53</sup> "Brief Survey," p. 53. He was commonly called *Doctor Clark*, for he had studied medicine as well as theology, and had obtained a diploma from "the faculty of physicians and surgeons in the University of Glasgow." ("New Light Set in a Clear Light," p. 59.) He was sometimes taunted by his adversaries for receiving fees as a medical practitioner.

and to exhibit the glory of the Mediator, and to proclaim a free pardon and an everlasting salvation.

A few months prior to his ordination at Ballibay, Mr. Clark first appeared before the public as a controversial writer. The attacks on the secession by Delap, Lynd, and others, had been industriously circulated, and another tract, of which Mr. Peebles, a licentiate of the presbytery of Tyrone, avowed himself the author,<sup>54</sup> had just issued from the press. In reply to these productions, Mr. Clark now published a pamphlet of upwards of one hundred closely printed duodecimo pages, entitled, "A Brief Survey of some Principles maintained by the General Synod of Ulster, and Practices carried on by several Members thereof." The language of this performance is often exceedingly uncouth, and it supplies abundant proof that its author was sadly deficient in literary polish; and yet it demonstrates that he possessed a respectable share of general information, and that he was well acquainted with the subject which he had undertaken to expound. The writer is obviously tinctured with the prejudices of his party, and he consequently speaks of the synod of Ulster in terms of too sweeping condemnation; but still his little work gives a better idea of the state of religion among Irish Presbyterians about the middle of the last century than any other contemporary publication. It must have been read with much avidity, as it would appear that its author obtained sale for an edition of no less than two thousand copies. In 1754, the Rev. John Semple,<sup>55</sup> minister of Ana-

<sup>54</sup> Mr. Clark asserts that this tract, in which he was personally assailed, was, in reality, the production of the Rev. James Orr, the minister of Loughgall, and that the name of Mr. Peebles, an "ancient probationer," was appended to it as a matter of convenience. Mr. Orr died in 1755, and, after a vacancy of about three years, Mr. Peebles was ordained as his successor. His pastorate was short, as he died in 1761.

<sup>55</sup> Mr. Semple belonged to the Old-Light party in the synod, and was considered one of its ablest champions. In 1736, he was ordained to the pastoral charge of the congregation of Ahoghill, where he remained until 1749, when he was removed to Anahilt. He died in 1758. It is probable that the proceedings of the Seceders at Loughaghery, in his own neighbourhood, led him to write "The Survey Impartially Examined." This pamphlet supplies some valuable historical information.



hilt, published a rejoinder, entitled, "The Survey Impartially Examined by Sacred Scripture and Sound Reason." This pamphlet, which is quite as large as that which it professes to answer, enters with considerable minuteness into most of the points discussed by Mr. Clark, and attempts a vindication of various synodical proceedings upon which he had commented with much severity. But though, in point of style, Mr. Semple has greatly the advantage of his antagonist, he is by no means so candid a controversialist. In his anxiety to sustain the reputation of the synod of Ulster, he often resorts to the most transparent sophistry. In 1755, Mr. Clark replied with great effect to his performance, in another still larger pamphlet, entitled, "New Light set in a Clear Light."<sup>56</sup> This publication closed the controversy.

There are extant several documents which illustrate the character of this devoted man, and these records attest with the utmost clearness that the Spirit of God unequivocally acknowledged the ministry of the early Seceders. If the conversion of sinners by his preaching is the best possible evidence that a pastor has received his commission from heaven, then, beyond all question, Mr. Clark possessed such credentials. Not a few, who afterwards became eminent Christians, declared that they heard from his lips those appeals which awakened them to seriousness. Though destitute of the graces of oratory, he could rivet the attention of his congregation, and his preaching often produced a remarkable impression. "I chose," said one of his hearers on his death-bed, "to sit in a dark place of the meeting-house, that I might the better conceal the Lord's kindness to me, in hearing the Gospel there, for often it was so great that I could scarcely contain myself."<sup>57</sup> The benefits of his ministry were not con-

<sup>56</sup> This publication has a second title-page, in which it is described as "A Reply to a late Pamphlet, entitled, 'The Survey Examined,' &c. From this second title-page it also appears that it was printed in Dublin, in 1755. The "Brief Survey" was printed in Armagh, by William Dickie.

<sup>57</sup> "Pastoral and Farewell Letter," pp. 25, 26. In May 1764, Mr. Clark, with about three hundred other Presbyterian emigrants, removed to America, in a vessel which had been sent to Narrow-water, near Newry, for the purpose of their conveyance. He died minister of a congregation at Long-Cane, Abbeville, South Carolina, toward the end of the year 1792. He expired

fined to those who had invited him to settle at Ballibay, for several Roman Catholics of the neighbourhood, in a state of spiritual concern, applied to him for religious instruction, and became steady and exemplary Presbyterians.

But whilst this good man was pursuing his career of usefulness, there was a member of the synod of Ulster who basely became his persecutor. The seceding erection was made up of the members of surrounding congregations, and this minister, annoyed, as it would appear, partly by the diminution of his flock, and partly by the shining zeal and piety of his clerical neighbour, contrived a plot for his imprisonment. The Rev. James Jackson of Ballibay, a man of unscrupulous character, was the individual implicated in this nefarious transaction. No one at all acquainted with his history could doubt Mr. Clark's attachment to the house of Hanover, for he had hazarded his life in the service of his sovereign when the Pretender was in Scotland; but it was known that, in common with the whole body of Seceders, he disapproved of the ordinary mode of swearing by kissing the Gospels, and that he objected to the phraseology of a part of the oath of abjuration. It was accordingly given out that he held treasonable principles, and, in the month of May 1752, he received a summons, on the Lord's-day, requiring him to appear before Alexander Montgomery and Richard Graham, Esqrs., two justices of the peace, and to purge himself of the charge of disloyalty. Mr. Clark seems to have previously obtained some intimation of this plot, for he was prepared to produce certificates from the magistrates of Glasgow, Lord Cathcart, and other persons of distinction, bearing the strongest testimony in his favour as a peaceable and faithful subject. All these documents were disregarded, and he was peremptorily required to take the oath of abjuration in the customary form. He at once professed his readiness to attest his loyalty by swearing with uplifted hand,

sitting on his chair, and the "Pastoral Letter" to his former congregation at Ballibay was found lying on the table before him. This letter, which was subsequently published, contains much interesting information, and is a precious memorial, as well of the deep piety as of the ministerial faithfulness of the author. One of his sons attained the dignity of an American judge.

but because he refused to kiss the book, and to adopt all the words of the prescribed formula, he was mulcted in the penalty of forty shillings. His enemies were not, however, to be satisfied with so slight an infliction. In the autumn of the same year, a second summons was issued; and, as he was apprehensive that a second refusal to take the oath would be attended with much more serious consequences, he deemed it prudent to retire to Scotland, and to remain there for some months. When he returned, he was permitted for a time to remain unmolested, but on Wednesday, the 23d January 1754, he was arrested in the castle of Newbliss, as he had just preached to the newly-erected congregation of that district, and as he was about to draw up a call to Mr. Thomson, the future minister.<sup>58</sup> He was then removed to a tavern in Rockcorry, where he was detained all night under a guard, and on the following day he was conveyed to the jail of Monaghan, accompanied by a strong escort of horse and foot. He remained in prison till the month of April,<sup>59</sup> when, on application to the judges of assize, it was discovered that there was an informality in the proceedings connected with his committal, and the sheriff was ordered to set him at liberty. Had Mr. Clark now commenced a suit for false imprisonment, he might have punished the magistrates who had displayed such suspicious anxiety for the honour of the oath of abjuration, but as they were henceforth content to take his loyalty for granted, he did not care to appear vindictive, or involve himself in the turmoil of litigation.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> As the synod of Ulster had in vain attempted to prevent the erection of the congregation of Newbliss, it is not improbable that his attendance there on this occasion added to the irritation of his enemies. Two of the elders and other members of the congregation of Mr. Jackson of Ballibay were concerned in his arrest. "New Light set in a Clear Light," p. 78.

<sup>59</sup> "The first week in prison," says Mr. Clark, in his letter to his congregation, "they absolutely refused bail; but on my brother-in-law giving a penal bond for £4000, they allowed me to walk the street within the corporation. Many of you then met every week for social prayer, to solicit the Lord for my liberty. One young couple of your number came and got their marriage solemnised in prison. You had also thirteen children baptised in prison. Two of these children had eight infants baptised by me in this country" [America.] "Pastoral Letter," pp. 20, 21.

<sup>60</sup> Some time afterwards, a most insidious attempt was made to injure the

Mr. Clark was the only associate minister settled in Ireland who was thrown into confinement in consequence of his scruples relative to the oath of abjuration. The treatment he experienced eventually reflected disgrace on those from whom it emanated; and even the most malignant enemies of the Seceders at length became ashamed of the business of persecution. The religious aspect of the synod of Ulster was now very different from that which it presented at the commencement of this century; but though its leading members rejected many of the doctrines maintained by Mr. Clark, they would doubtless have acknowledged that he was fined and incarcerated in direct violation of the rights of conscience. It still contained ministers to whose character he was himself prepared to bear the most honourable testimony; for he declares, in one of his controversial publications, that there were "some old reverend gentlemen, members of the General Synod, with whom he had the happiness to be a little acquainted, and whom, for their personal piety, he was bound to esteem and love."<sup>61</sup>

At this time the annual meetings of the General Synod presented, in the decreasing attendance, a melancholy indication of growing indifference. Seldom more than the one-half, and sometimes scarcely the one-third, of the ministers appeared on these occasions. Of those present at the commencement of the business many departed before its close, so that matters of general importance were often left to be determined by a very small number of individuals. To secure a better representation, and to induce more distant members to attend, the committee of overtures, at the annual meeting of 1752, proposed that "the synod should, for the future, be composed of delegates from the respective presbyteries," that "their charges in attending should be de-

Seceders by the appointment of William Craig, one of Mr. Clark's elders, as high-constable. The situation was lucrative, and it was perhaps expected that he would abjure his principles, and take the oath of office, in the usual form, by kissing the book. When he declined to do so, he was thrown into prison, and kept in confinement for several months. With much difficulty his liberation was at length effected. "Pastoral Letter," p. 26.

<sup>61</sup> "Brief Survey," preface, p. ii.



frayed" by their constituents, and that the number of delegates in each case should be regulated by the extent of the presbytery. Upwards of forty years before, a similar proposal had been successfully resisted,<sup>62</sup> but it was now introduced under more favourable auspices, as it was recommended by a committee of the supreme judicatory. Though the synod, in this instance, agreed to refer it to the consideration of the several presbyteries, the decision was postponed from year to year, and at length, without any discussion, the project was relinquished. An abortive attempt, made in 1757, to constrain the ministers and elders to attend with greater regularity, was the only result of its agitation.

Ever since the separation of the presbytery of Antrim, there had been a party in the synod of Ulster who sympathised with the non-subscribers, and who were anxious for the renewal of ecclesiastical intercourse. The establishment of the Widows' Fund prepared the way for an accommodation, and soon afterwards some decided steps were taken to effect its accomplishment. At the annual meeting of synod in 1758, the following motion was unanimously adopted:—"As it would tend much to the credit and advantage of dissenters in general that their different associations should correspond with and mutually assist each other in their consultations for supporting their general interest, and that they should appear in the eye of the world as one body, and engaged in one common cause; some members be appointed to write to the presbytery of Antrim and to Doctor Duchal [one of the non-subscribing ministers of Dublin] desiring that correspondents from them and from the brethren in the South may be appointed to meet the next General Synod, and that correspondents from the synod be appointed to attend any of their meetings when the brethren shall think it necessary and desire it."<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> See the first paragraph of chap. xxiii.

<sup>63</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod for 1758. Doctor Duchal, mentioned in this minute, was originally pastor of a dissenting congregation at Cambridge, in England. He subsequently removed, first to Antrim, and then to Wood Street, Dublin, in both of which places he was successor to Abernethy.

This resolution illustrates the extent of the change which must have taken place since 1726 in the sentiments of the synod of Ulster. The non-subscribers still adhered as pertinaciously as ever to all their original principles, and it was well understood that they were receding farther and farther from the doctrines of the Westminster formularies; but, instead of bearing testimony against their growing defections, or exhibiting any anxiety to maintain its own character as an evangelical Church, the synod voluntarily invites them to enter into a friendly correspondence, that both parties may "appear, in the eye of the world, *as one body*, and engaged in one common cause." It is to be observed that this resolution passed in *interloquitur*, or at a private meeting of the court, attended almost exclusively by ministers, and held towards the close of the proceedings; for had it been brought forward at an earlier period in open session, and before any considerable body of the elders, it would not probably have been adopted without opposition. It is not strange that it met with the ready acquiescence of the ministers who happened to be present, as they were now so generally infected with doctrinal errors. The personal respectability of some of the non-subscribers, as well as the high social position of some of the laity adhering to them,<sup>64</sup> suggested to the members of the synod that they would add to their own influence and credit by a renewal of ecclesiastical intercourse.

There was at this time a minister, holding non-subscribing principles, whose intellectual and literary eminence shed a lustre on the cause of Irish nonconformity. The Rev. Dr. John Leland has long been known to all British theologians as one of our best writers on the deistical controversy. This learned and amiable man, who, for nearly half a century, was one of the ministers of Eustace Street congregation, Dublin, acquired great distinction by his numerous and valuable publications. Entering the field

<sup>64</sup> Mr. Damer of Shronehill, Tipperary, possessed a large property there, which descended to his nephew and heir, Lord Milton. Mr. Bagwell had a fine estate at Clonmel. Mr. Hare, the father of Lord Listowel, was also a man of large fortune. Mr. Stewart of Newtownards has been already mentioned. See note 5 of this chapter.

of discussion against the most acute and accomplished infidels of the age, he nobly vindicated the authority of revealed religion. Dr. Leland was of a very different spirit from others with whom he was associated, and his works testify that he held and appreciated doctrines<sup>65</sup> which they either totally rejected or coldly

<sup>65</sup> Dr. Leland had not a firm grasp of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and hence a tone of legality pervades his sermons, but on other points he speaks with sufficient perspicuity. In a letter, dated December 12, 1720, and published in the "Monthly Repository," vol. xxi. p. 722, he thus expresses himself on the question of special grace—"I think it is very clear from the sacred writings that *there is such a thing as special distinguishing grace* given to some of the fallen human race above others in time, and that *this flows from special love*, and that this love was from everlasting." His sermons bear equally decisive testimony to his views on the subject of the atonement. Thus, he says—"It was agreed, in the councils of the Divine wisdom and grace, that upon his (the Son's) performing the work assigned him, *i.e.*, upon his taking upon him our nature, and in that nature yielding a perfect and spotless obedience and righteousness—an obedience whereby the Divine law should be highly honoured, and displayed in all the majesty of its authority, and all the beauty and excellency of its precepts; and *upon his also submitting*, for us men and for our salvation, *to the deepest humiliations and the most bitter sufferings, and even to a cruel and ignominious death, that he might make atonement for our sins; the merit of this his obedience and sufferings should be applied* to all those that should return to God through him." ("Sermons," vol. iv. pp. 380, 381. London, 1769. See also vol. i. pp. 250 and 219, 220, and 214; vol. iii. p. 96.) In the same sermons, his views of the Sonship and Deity of Christ are stated with equal perspicuity. Thus, he gives it as his opinion, that Christ is called "the Son of God," "to signify *the ineffable and most intimate union and conjunction* between the Father and him; that he is the *partaker of the same Divine nature, the same glorious perfections* with the eternal Father, and is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." ("Sermons," vol. iv. pp. 89, 90.) "The *infinite dignity*" of Christ is a phrase which he frequently employs, and indicates a topic upon which he evidently delighted to expatiate. He describes our Lord as "in the form of God," (vol. iv. p. 288,) as "God manifest in the flesh," (vol. iv. p. 285,) and as the "*eternal Son*," (vol. i. p. 99, vol. iii. p. 112,) "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily," (vol. iii. p. 112.) Speaking of the things revealed in Scripture, he mentions "the doctrines relating to the wonderful methods of our redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ, *the doctrine of the holy and ever blessed Trinity*, the incarnation of the Son of God, *the satisfaction he hath offered for the sins of the world*, the new covenant founded in his blood, his perpetual intercession for us in heaven, and the universal dominion he is

entertained; but his name was a tower of strength to his brethren, and led not a few to think more favourably of his views on the subject of ecclesiastical polity. His celebrity probably induced some members of the General Synod to give up their opposition to the project for a renewal of the correspondence with the non-subscribers.

At the very opening of the annual meeting of 1759, and even before a new moderator was chosen, the Rev. Alexander Colville, the Rev. James Mackay,<sup>66</sup> and the Rev. William Nevin, presented themselves to the court, and handed in a commission, signed by the moderator and clerk of the presbytery of Antrim, appointing them to attend the synod, and "to join in consultation" with it in all matters "of general concern to the Protestant dissenting interest."<sup>67</sup> This proceeding seems to have taken some of the ministers and elders by surprise, as they did not probably consider that the resolution of the *interloquitur* of the previous synod invited the non-subscribers to participate so formally in their ecclesiastical deliberations; but, at this stage of the business, the matter was permitted to pass, and the commission was sustained. Next morning,<sup>68</sup> however, some members

invested with as Mediator," (vol. i. p. 314.) Dr. Leland has been often most absurdly claimed as a Unitarian, but these testimonies, and many others which might be easily adduced, abundantly prove that he has thus been sadly misrepresented. Among the subscribers to the four-volume edition of his sermons, are the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of Armagh, and no less than fourteen bishops of the Established Church of Ireland. He died in January 1766, in the seventy-fifth year of his age. He published "The Divine Authority of the Old and New Testament asserted," in 2 vols. 8vo, "A View of the Deistical Writers," in 2 vols. 8vo, "The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation shown from the state of religion in the ancient heathen world," in 2 vols. 4to, and several other works. His Sermons were published after his death.

<sup>66</sup> The Rev. James Mackay was one of the ministers of the 1st congregation, Belfast. He died in 1781.

<sup>67</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod. At the same time letters were read "signifying the hearty inclination and readiness" of the southern presbyteries to correspond with the synod, and apologising for the absence of representatives. They promised to send some of their members to subsequent meetings, "if that should be judged necessary." MS. Minutes.

<sup>68</sup> At this time the synod always met at five o'clock on Tuesday evening,



called the attention of the synod to the subject, and entered into a distinct statement of their own views as to the character of the correspondence. They observed, that by "the general interest" of dissenters, mentioned in the minute of 1758, they understood simply whatever pertained to their common secular concerns, and, after some discussion, the synod agreed to adopt the explanation. The more zealous friends of the non-subscribers, among whom Mr. Cherry of Clare was still conspicuous, were so much dissatisfied with this decision, that they insisted upon recording their dissent, declaring that the non-subscribing commissioners "should be consulted in all matters of importance." The deputies themselves were somewhat annoyed by this occurrence, and it tended rather to abate the cordiality of the correspondence, as, for several years afterwards, the representatives of the Antrim presbytery seldom conferred with the synod, except when convened for the transaction of private business.

George II. died in October 1760,<sup>69</sup> and the synod, at its meeting in the following June, resolved to present an address of congratulation to the new sovereign. The presbytery of Antrim joined in this expression of loyalty; and that they might "appear in the eye of the world as one body," the parties agreed on this occasion to describe themselves as "The Presbyterian Ministers of the Northern Association in Ireland." When congratulating George III., two years afterwards, on the birth of the Prince of Wales, they employed the same designation.<sup>70</sup>

when the moderator preached. Next morning, two hours (from eight to ten o'clock) were spent in devotional exercises. Public business commenced at ten o'clock.

<sup>69</sup> In the month of February of this year, three French frigates, under the command of the celebrated Thurot, appeared in Belfast Lough. Carrickfergus was taken, and the Rev. David Fullarton, the Presbyterian minister of the place, was sent to Belfast with a flag of truce, and a letter to the sovereign, in which the French commodore threatened, that if not immediately furnished with a large supply of provisions, he would burn the town. In a few days, however, preparations were made to attack him, and meanwhile he found it expedient to re-embark his troops and withdraw. His squadron was attacked and captured by three British frigates immediately afterwards. He was killed in the action.

<sup>70</sup> Two ministers, who cannot be passed over unnoticed, died in the inter-

For many years past, the candidates for the pastoral office belonging to the General Synod and to the presbytery of Antrim had been trained under the same theological professors, so that it is easy to understand why the two parties were now so much inclined to fraternise. The ministers not only preached occasionally in each other's pulpits, but passed without hesitation from the one body into the other; and the dread of alienating the orthodox laity was, doubtless, the great reason why the majority of the members of the synod did not seek to consummate a coalition. A species of preaching which did not distinctly exhibit any of the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, and which was fitted neither to awaken the careless nor to comfort the penitent, at this time too generally prevailed. Under these circumstances, it may appear singular that the Seceders were not more successful in planting congregations. From 1755 to 1763, there were only two additions made to the number of the associate ministers in Ireland.<sup>71</sup> The poverty of the country partially accounts for

val between the presentation of these two addresses. In 1762, the congregation of Corboy, county Longford, became vacant by the death of the Rev. James Bond. Mr. Bond was ordained in Corboy in 1723, and in 1731 received a call to Armagh, to succeed Mr. Hutcheson, but the synod would not consent to his removal. Willoughby Bond of Farra, Esq., late high-sheriff of the county of Longford, and one of the most respectable members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, is his grandson. In May 1763, the Rev. Victor Ferguson of Strabane died. Mr. Ferguson was minister of Strabane upwards of forty-six years. He belonged to the New-Light party in the synod. He bequeathed a house and farm to his successors, and the minister of 1st Strabane still enjoys this inheritance. Another minister connected with the synod of Ulster, the Rev. Hugh Gaston of Ballywillan, published, in 1763, a work which has been greatly valued by the religious public, and which has been frequently reprinted. It is entitled, "A Scripture Account of the Faith and Practice of Christians, consisting of large and numerous collections of Pertinent Texts of Scripture upon the sundry Articles of Revealed Religion." This work is favourably noticed by Horne, in his "Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures." Mr. Gaston was ordained at Ballywillan in 1748, and died in 1766.

<sup>71</sup> In 1757, the Rev. Robert Law was settled at Carnone, near Raphoe, and, in 1759, the Rev. William Ronaldson was ordained at Scarvagh, near Loughbrickland. The Antiburgher presbytery of Ireland was divided, in April 1761, into the two presbyteries of Newtownlimavady, and of Moira

this slow progress. The mass of the people had before been in very indigent circumstances, and a famine which afflicted Ulster in 1757 almost completely exhausted their resources.<sup>72</sup> As the adherents of the secession were generally poor, this calamity pressed upon them with peculiar severity. Licentiates were unwilling to undertake the charge of vacant congregations which could hold out to them no fair prospect of a maintenance, and some of the ministers already settled in the country were so indifferently supported, that they were beginning to think of emigrating to America.<sup>73</sup>

The circumstances of ministers in Ulster must have been exceedingly uncomfortable, if they could have fairly calculated upon bettering their temporal condition by crossing the Atlantic, for at this very period the most discouraging intelligence was transmitted from the colonies. At its annual meeting in 1760, the Rev. Charles Beatty, a member of the presbytery of Philadelphia, presented to the General Synod an address from the corporation of Philadelphia and New York, setting forth the distressed condition of Presbyterian ministers and their families in the New World, and earnestly applying for assistance. The colonists, no doubt, considered that they had a claim upon the Irish Presbyterian Church, inasmuch as their country was so largely occupied by emigrants from Ulster.<sup>74</sup> Mr. Beatty met with a most cor-

and Lisburn. The presbytery of Newtownlimavady consisted of four ministers, Messrs. Stewart, Tennent, Reid, and Law, and had under its care the vacant congregations of Aghadoey, Ramelton, Ahoghill, Claghmore, and Garva. The presbytery of Moira and Lisburn consisted also of four ministers, Messrs. Patton, Arrott, Hume, and Martin, and had under its care the vacant congregations of Ballyeaston, Larne, Belfast, Drumbanagher, and Sheep-bridge. Mr. Ronaldson of Scarvagh was connected with the Burgher presbytery of Down.

<sup>72</sup> On the 2d of September 1756, a remarkably high wind greatly damaged the ripened grain, and caused a dearth the year following. M'Skimin's "Carrickfergus," p. 81.

<sup>73</sup> Clark, who soon afterwards emigrated, says, archly, that about this period "some appeared, in practice, to adopt the Quaker's opinion, that very little or no salary should be paid to ministers." "Pastoral Letter," p. 27.

<sup>74</sup> It is said that, from 1729 to about the middle of the last century, 12,000

dial reception from the synod, and his description of the wretched condition of his brethren in America awakened deep and general sympathy. It appeared that the hardships of poverty had been aggravated by the miseries of a war with the Indians, during which these savage foes had carried many into captivity. Though the synod was embarrassed by the impoverished condition of a large portion of the people under its care, it could not resist this touching appeal, and, with the utmost unanimity, it agreed to appoint a day for taking up a collection in all its congregations in aid of the American sufferers. On this occasion the Irish Presbyterians, "out of their deep poverty," contributed upwards of £400.<sup>75</sup>

This seasonable assistance was acknowledged in a letter addressed to the synod, dated February 12, 1763. At the general meeting in the following June, the Rev. Gilbert Kennedy was chosen moderator. In 1744, when the second congregation of Belfast became vacant by the death of the Rev. James Kirkpatrick, one of the original non-subscribers, this gentleman accepted an invitation to become his successor; but, on his removal from Killileagh, where he had previously been settled, Mr. Kennedy

emigrants arrived annually from the North of Ireland. Baird's "Religion in the United States," p. 156.

<sup>75</sup> In the MS. Minutes of the Synod for 1763, there is an address from "the corporation in the city of Philadelphia, for the relief of poor and distressed Presbyterian ministers and their widows and children," in which it is stated that, by Colonel Dunne of Dublin, they had received remittances to the amount of £412, 3s. 11d., "the greater part of which was paid in the name of the General Synod." The remainder was probably contributed by the non-subscribing Presbyterians of Dublin. A few years before this, or in 1754, a petition was presented to the synod by the Rev. Gilbert Tennent, a native of Ulster, in the name of the synod of New York, and the trustees of the infant college of New Jersey, requesting "one Sabbath-day's collection in the several congregations," to assist in the establishment of the new seminary. The synod agreed to grant the prayer of the memorial, but a very inconsiderable sum appears to have been actually raised. It is worthy of notice, that the Rev. Dr. Samuel Finlay, president of the college of Princeton, New Jersey, from 1761 to 1766, was an emigrant from the province of Ulster, and a native of Armagh. His immediate successor was the celebrated Dr. Witherspoon. Hodge's "Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America," vol. ii. p. 363.



did not relinquish his connection with the synod of Ulster.<sup>76</sup> After preaching, as moderator of the preceding year, at the opening of the annual meeting of 1764, he received the *unanimous* thanks "of the house for his very acceptable sermon," and was "requested to print it for public edification."<sup>77</sup> The discourse was accordingly committed to the press, and, in a merely literary point of view, it is by no means discreditable to the author; but, as a specimen of the species of theology which the synod was now disposed to patronise, it proves to what extent the largest section of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland had departed from its original principles. The allusions of the preacher to the great doctrines of the Gospel are most unsatisfactory and vague, and, throughout the whole sermon, Mr. Kennedy apparently labours to fortify the minds of the assembled ministers against the fear of offending their orthodox congregations; but, in doing so, he handles the Word of God deceitfully, for, strangely misrepresenting the inspired testimony, he tells them how the Apostle Paul "commended himself to the consciences of such as were *well disposed and unprejudiced*," by preaching "a doctrine which was very unpopular."<sup>78</sup> In the sceptical spirit of all abettors of the New-Light divinity, he speaks as if what the New Testament calls "the full assurance of understanding," as to Christian doctrine, were utterly unattainable. "The impartial inquirer," says he, "having carefully considered every side of a question, becomes the more convinced *how unbecoming it is to be dogmatical in disputable matters*." Of all the existing ecclesiastical grievances, he obviously considers subscription to the Confession of Faith as the most intolerable. Hence he complains that "all whose candid inquiries may lead them to differ from the *popular authorised* opinions, must either be silent, or stand exposed to

<sup>76</sup> Mr. Kennedy was originally ordained in Lisburn. (See chap. xxvii.) On his removal to Belfast he still remained a member of the presbytery of Killlileagh.

<sup>77</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod for 1764.

<sup>78</sup> His text is Gal. i. 10. "Or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." The quotations from the sermon given in the text may be found at pp. 12, 13, 40, 41.

public odium. It were," he adds, "much for the honour of Christianity, and the interest of truth, if *every discouragement* to rational and free inquiry *were removed* out of the Churches."

Had not the mass of the Presbyterian laity of Ulster been zealously attached to the Westminster formularies, an attempt would, perhaps, ere this have been made to set aside, or at least modify, the standing order relative to subscription. But instead of proposing an innovation which would certainly have encountered an immense amount of opposition, the New-Light ministers, wherever their influence preponderated, deemed it expedient to pursue the less constitutional course of conniving at the evasion of the law, in the hope that it would thus gradually sink into desuetude. Some of the aged members of the synod complained of this irregularity, but their remonstrances were disregarded.<sup>79</sup> A case which was submitted to the consideration of the supreme judicatory of the Church in 1764, shows at once the gross dishonesty of some of the subscribers, and the extreme difficulty of convicting any man of heresy before the existing ecclesiastical tribunals. The Rev. John Stirling, who had been minister of Ballykelly for upwards of half a century, died in 1752, and was succeeded in the pastoral charge by the Rev. John Haslett. In 1757, Mr. Haslett removed to Bandon, and, after a vacancy of about five years' duration, the Rev. John Nelson was settled in the congregation in October 1762. The doctrine preached by Mr. Nelson, when on trials, had been such as his parishioners could relish; but he had not been long ordained until they perceived a wonderful change in the tone of his ministrations. His

<sup>79</sup> In 1764, the Rev. John Holmes, minister of the 2d congregation of Glendermot, published a sermon, which he intended as a testimony against prevailing errors. His text is Rom. v. 7, and from this passage he takes occasion to point out the distinction between "a good moralist and a godly man." In the preface, he complains that "many legal preachers have subscribed [the confession], and have given ground to suspect that they have done so *in a very disingenuous manner.*" Mr. Holmes was originally minister of Donegal, where he was ordained in 1715, so that he had been a member of the synod during the period of the subscription controversy. He removed to Glendermot in 1744. He seems to have been a man of zeal and piety, though somewhat eccentric. He died in 1773.

private conversation was as unsatisfactory as his public services, for he spoke of the Confession of Faith, and of its tenets, in a style which awakened the indignation of a people who had been well instructed in the faith by the pious and orthodox Mr. Stirling. They at length became so much dissatisfied, that they determined to seek redress; and they accordingly tabled a complaint against their new pastor before the presbytery of Derry. Instead of taking up the charges, or examining the proffered evidence, the presbytery, in the first instance, "enjoined" Mr. Nelson "to use his best endeavours to remove every suspicion" of his soundness in the faith, and then agreed to refer the whole case to the decision of the General Synod. Of the heterodoxy of the accused minister there can be no doubt, as he himself, some time afterwards, published "A Letter to the Protestant Dissenters in the Parish of Ballykelly," in which he denounces creeds as "engines of discord," describes Adam, when in paradise, as "a mere simpleton, an abject slave to his appetites, an easy dupe to importunity," and asserts that "the bulk of the Christian world, for thirteen hundred years past, have not worshipped the true God, but one of their own invention."<sup>80</sup> When the complaint came before the General Synod in Lurgan, the Rev. Andrew Ferguson of Burt<sup>81</sup> stated the course pursued by the presbytery of Derry, and the charges were afterwards investigated in detail. From a court, whose leading members did not differ greatly in sentiment from the accused, an impartial award was not to be expected. Though Mr. Nelson himself partially admitted the truth of some of the counts in his indictment, and

<sup>80</sup> This pamphlet, which was printed at Belfast in 1766, contains 150 duodecimo pages. The quotations given in the text are taken from pp. 10, 14, 23, and 29. The last quotation is perhaps the first approach to an avowal of Unitarianism ever made by a minister who had been a member of the General Synod.

<sup>81</sup> This minister was the son of the Rev. Andrew Ferguson, who was ordained in Burt in 1690. The father and son had the charge of the congregation of Burt for nearly a century. The minister mentioned in the text was ordained in 1725, and died in 1787. Sir Robert A. Ferguson, Bart., M.P. for the city of Londonderry, is his great-grandson. His grandson, the first Sir Robert, was created a baronet of the United Kingdom in 1801.

though his entire defence was suspicious and equivocal, the synod almost unanimously agreed to a verdict of "not proved." But the people of Ballykelly were not to be baffled by this unrighteous deliverance. Notwithstanding the decision of the synod in his favour, they still persisted in their opposition to a minister who had attempted so impudently to delude them, and Mr. Nelson soon found his situation so uncomfortable, that he deemed it prudent, in a few months, to resign the charge of the congregation.

Mr. Nelson had, it appears, prior to his ordination, annexed his signature to the Confession of Faith, but he insinuates in his pamphlet that he subscribed only in a certain "sense," and with certain "limitations." Though the conduct of this minister was exceedingly uncandid, he was probably blamed by some of his brethren for the freedom with which he occasionally expressed himself to the people of Ballykelly; as one of the favourite maxims of a portion of the New-Light party in the synod was, that they should "think with the wise and speak with the vulgar."<sup>82</sup> Their actions were often more significant than their words, and their anxiety to effect a reunion with the presbytery of Antrim betokened how much they were galled by the fetters of subscription. About this time they advanced another step towards the accomplishment of their favourite project. At the annual meeting of 1767, a resolution was unanimously adopted, to the effect that the non-subscribing presbytery should be "invited to correspond with the synod." It was thus proposed, that the two bodies should approximate still more closely than they had ever yet done since their separation, as, in the ecclesiastical language of the period, the *correspondence* contemplated implied that the non-subscribers should send to the General Synod representatives who should be fully entitled to take part in all its deliberations. There was a pretty full attendance of the members of the presbytery of Antrim at the synodical meeting which passed this resolution, and they were doubtless highly gratified by an overture involving a virtual abandonment of the grounds on which the synod had formerly voted for their exclusion; but

<sup>82</sup> Nelson's Letter, p. 143.



whilst they cordially accepted of the invitation, they, at the same time, modestly stated, that they did not intend to avail themselves of all the privileges which the parent Church now desired to confer. "They returned their thanks for the compliment offered them, and expressed their readiness to give their opinions when asked, with freedom and candour [to the synod], but begged to be excused from giving their votes in anything that implied jurisdiction."<sup>83</sup>

Other proceedings of this date betray a disposition, on the part of the General Synod, to encourage the advocates of heterodoxy. About the middle of this century, two missionaries of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, or, as they were then commonly designated, two *mountain ministers*, the Rev. John Cameron and the Rev. Thomas Cuthbertson, preached in various parts of the North of Ireland, and attracted considerable audiences. In 1752, Mr. Cuthbertson emigrated to America, under the direction of the Reformed Presbytery in Scotland; and Mr. Cameron, having renounced the peculiar principles of the Covenanting Church, and joined the communion of the synod of Ulster, was settled, in 1755, as the minister of Dunluce.<sup>84</sup> Mr. Cameron was a man of genius, but his imagination was more vigorous than his judgment, and as he was never thoroughly established in the Calvinistic theology, his principles were easily undermined. He had not

<sup>83</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod for 1767.

<sup>84</sup> See note 44 of this chapter. The first presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church was constituted at Braehead, in the parish of Carnwath, in Scotland, in August 1743, and consisted originally of two ministers, the Reverend Messrs. M'Millan and Nairne, and some ruling elders. ("Hist. Part of the Testimony of the Ref. Pres. Ch. in Scotland," p. 203.) About the year 1761, the first Irish Covenanting minister, the Rev. Matthew Lynd, a native of Larne, was ordained at Vow, near Rasharkin. Mr. Lynd resided in Newtownlimavady, and extended his labours through the county of Derry, and parts of the counties of Antrim and Donegal. The Rev. William Martin, the first minister of Kellswater, settled in this country about the same time. In 1765, the Rev. William James was ordained at Bready, near Derry, and, shortly afterwards, the Rev. Daniel M'Clelland was set apart to the pastoral office at Laymore, near Ballymena. Each of these ministers had originally the charge of several small societies, scattered over an extensive district.

been many years appointed to the pastoral charge of Dunluce when he became infected with the New-Light divinity; and after wandering for some time from error to error, he at length settled down in Unitarianism. In 1767, he published a pamphlet, entitled, "The Policy of Satan to destroy the Christian Religion," in which he endeavours to prove that "the several systems of human articles established in the Reformed Churches have a direct tendency to root out all appearance of conscience and honesty from among men."<sup>85</sup> Though this little work was an anonymous performance, its author soon became known; but, instead of being branded with any mark of ecclesiastical censure, Mr. Cameron was, in the following year, chosen moderator of the General Synod.

Some time after the establishment of the Widows' Fund, the synod had solicited a correspondence with the southern association. The application was favourably received, but no deputy had hitherto appeared in the supreme court of the Church in Ulster. In 1769, the Rev. James Rodgers, the minister of Fethard, was present at the annual meeting, and though it would seem that he did not bear any commission from the body with which he was connected, he was requested "to sit and vote as a member of the synod." With this invitation Mr. Rodgers complied.<sup>86</sup>

For twenty years past, the synod of Ulster had been gradually degenerating, and the date at which this chapter closes marks a dreary period in the history of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Of late, the Seceders had made very little progress, and

<sup>85</sup> "Policy of Satan," p. 63. Mr. Cameron puts this sentiment into the mouth of Satan when plotting against the Church, but he obviously approves of the wisdom of the arch-deceiver. It is probable that the publication of this pamphlet was suggested by the appearance, in 1766, of the celebrated work against subscription, entitled, "The Confessional," by Archdeacon Blackburne.

<sup>86</sup> At this meeting the Monaghan presbytery reported to the synod that "Mr. Plunket was removed from Eunniskillen to Strand Street, Dublin, in January 1769." Mr. Plunket had, for twenty years, been minister of Eunniskillen. He survived his removal to Dublin little more than nine years, as he died in 1778. He was the father of the late lord-chancellor of Ireland, and the grandfather of the present Bishop of Tuam.

some of the ministers, by conduct unbecoming their profession, had greatly damaged the reputation of the associate body. The Covenanters, or Reformed Presbyterians, had organised a few small congregations, but their influence was scarcely felt, for though they had now three or four ministers who faithfully proclaimed the way of salvation, their refusal to recognise the civil government of the country, and other peculiarities, formed insuperable obstacles in the way of their prosperity. Few of the Seceding or Covenanting preachers were possessed of superior talent, and most of them were very imperfectly educated, so that they failed to secure the attention and respect of the more influential classes of the community. In the larger section of the Irish Presbyterian Church there were some ministers of highly cultivated minds, but, even in point of literary attainments, the General Synod was rapidly declining. It now exhibited but few signs of spiritual life, and the records of the proceedings of its annual meetings are a humiliating memorial of the lukewarmness and secularity by which it was pervaded.<sup>87</sup> It had still some members who defended, as well as adorned, "the doctrine which is according to godliness;" but the majority of its ministers rejected the Scriptural articles of that confession which they had solemnly subscribed, so that the message to the angel of the Church of Sardis might have been most appropriately addressed to it—"I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die."

<sup>87</sup> From 1756 to 1769, only two congregations, Buckna and Armoy, were added to the synod of Ulster. Both these erections met with much opposition: Buckna was erected in 1756, and Armoy in 1769.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

A.D. 1770-1793.

*Discouraging situation of the Church, and symptoms of its decline—Subscription to the Confession of Faith attacked by Cameron, and defended by M'Dowel—Case of Mr. Stephenson, a licentiate, and erection of the presbytery of Belfast—Agrarian disturbances, and death of Mr. Morell—Emigration to America—Political changes—Rise of the Volunteers—Alarm of Government—Repeal of the Test Act—Increasing influence of the Volunteers—The Marriage Act, and the Act for the Relief of Seceders—Proposed increase of the Royal Bounty—General election of 1783, and Dungannon meeting of Volunteers—Dr. Campbell appointed to apply for an augmentation of the Royal Bounty—His partial success—Endowment of Seceders—Burghers and Antiburghers endeavour to effect a union, but their attempts unsuccessful—Controversy between the Bishop of Cloyne and Dr. Campbell—Discussion between Messrs. Rogers and M'Garragh—Mr. Black appointed agent for the Synod of Ulster—Another augmentation of Royal Bounty—Prevalence of anti-evangelical doctrine—Resolutions respecting subscription to the Confession of Faith—Low state of ministerial education—Attempts to establish collegiate seminaries—Slow progress of Church extension—Prevalence of a secular spirit—Cases of Sabbath desecration—Seceding communions—State of the Episcopal Church.*

THE prospects of Irish Presbyterianism were never more discouraging than about the date at which this chapter commences. The good name of a religious community depends much upon the character of its teachers; but though the synod of Ulster still contained a considerable number of members whose deportment was most exemplary, the conduct of others tended greatly to damage its reputation. Some had lately acted so improperly, that it had been found necessary to inflict upon them the penalties of ecclesiastical discipline; and the presbytery of Dublin had been recently engaged in a very painful investigation, which had issued in the suspension of one of the ministers of the



Irish metropolis.<sup>1</sup> Emigration was continually weakening the strength of the Presbyterian population, and as the royal grant afforded a very small dividend to each recipient, comparatively few of the members of the General Synod enjoyed anything like a comfortable maintenance. Parents were unwilling to encourage their children to devote themselves to the pastoral office, as it presented the prospect of a life of perpetual poverty; and thoughtful men, who were concerned for the support of the cause of nonconformity, could not look forward to the future without the most gloomy anticipations.<sup>2</sup> The difficulty of procuring a supply of preachers for the pulpits of vacant congregations had led to a relaxation of the rules relative to the course of preparatory study; and as individuals very indifferently qualified, in point of literary attainments, had thus obtained license and ordination, the synod, at its annual meeting in 1770, passed a series of resolutions, with a view to elevate the standard of professional education. But when the arrangements now proposed are contrasted with those adopted forty years before, they afford melancholy evidence of the declension of the Church. In 1730, every candidate, after having obtained the degree of master of arts, was required to devote at least four years to the study of theology, and it was expected that he would, meanwhile, spend two seasons at some Divinity Hall either of the Dutch or Scottish colleges; but now no academic diploma was deemed necessary, and an attendance at the university for four sessions of five months each was considered a sufficient amount of ministerial training.

The enemies of the Westminster Confession had been long

<sup>1</sup> In 1769, the Rev. John Baird, pastor of Capel Street congregation, was suspended from the exercise of his ministry, first by the presbytery of Dublin, and afterwards by the synod of Ulster. In 1777, he was again suspended by a committee of synod specially appointed to investigate certain charges preferred against him. Mr. Baird now renounced the jurisdiction of the synod, and conformed to the Established Church, in which he obtained the small benefice of Cloughran, near Dublin.

<sup>2</sup> It appears from the Minutes of the Synod of Ulster for 1770, that whilst *seven* ministers had been ordained during the preceding year, only *four* candidates had been licensed to preach, and but *two* were on trials for license.

consolidating their influence, and they were never perhaps, numerically, much more powerful than about this period. The students educated under Hutcheson and Leechman could not be expected to look with any favour upon the Calvinistic theology; and as some of them were now among the leaders of the synod, nothing but the well known attachment of the people to their ecclesiastical formularies prevented a vigorous and united effort for setting aside the law of subscription. About this time, a motion for its abolition was actually discussed in the committee of overtures at a meeting of the General Synod, and the proposal was favourably entertained;<sup>3</sup> but the danger of the attempt soon became apparent, and, on reconsideration, its abettors deemed it prudent, for the present, to relinquish their design.

A member of the synod of Ulster, who continued for upwards of half a century to adorn the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, now began to attract some notice. Soon after Mr. Nelson had resigned the charge of Ballykelly, Mr. Benjamin M'Dowel<sup>4</sup> was appointed his successor, and the young pastor in a short time nobly justified the choice of an ancient and respectable congregation. Mr. M'Dowel was a sound divine, a graceful and dignified speaker, a man of singular piety, and a most acceptable preacher. In 1769, the Rev. John Cameron, already known as a popular writer,<sup>5</sup> published a pamphlet, en-

<sup>3</sup> King's "Vindication of the Presbytery of Belfast against Mr. Stephenson's Review," pp. 9, 10.

<sup>4</sup> This excellent minister was born in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, in the United States of America, on the 25th of December 1739. His parents were natives of Connor, in the county of Antrim. After having studied for some time at the college of Princeton, he was removed to the University of Glasgow. It so happened that Dr. Leechman had before this resigned the chair of divinity, so that the young student was not much exposed to the influence of so dangerous a theological teacher. He was licensed to preach by the presbytery of Glasgow in 1765, and afterwards, when in Ireland on a visit to his relations, he received a call from the people of Ballykelly, and was ordained in 1766. He died in 1824. Funeral sermon by Dr. Horner.

<sup>5</sup> The year preceding, Mr. Cameron published his "Messiah," a work of imagination of the epic character, in a duodecimo of 356 pages. It was republished in 1811.

titled "The Catholic Christian," in which he endeavoured to demonstrate the folly of requiring subscription to creeds or confessions. Though this little work was anonymous, its author was immediately recognised, and, as its style was attractive, it produced a considerable impression. In the following year, Mr. M'Dowel published a reply, distinguished by that candour, modesty, and good sense, which he uniformly exhibited. The minister of Dunluce again appeared upon the theological arena, and the controversy was kept up for several years;<sup>6</sup> but, throughout the whole discussion, Mr. M'Dowel conducted the argument with an ability and learning alike creditable to himself and serviceable to the cause which he advocated. Had it not been for his seasonable vindication of the Westminster standards, the New-Light party would perhaps have soon ventured to demand openly from the synod the formal repeal of the law of subscription.

As matters stood, the supporters of the confession were now but a minority in the supreme court of the Presbyterian Church in Ulster. There were presbyteries where this formulary was never mentioned in cases of license and ordination, and where not one of the members approved of its theological principles.<sup>7</sup> The orthodox ministers, aware of their numerical inferiority, were deterred from making any strenuous effort to enforce the

<sup>6</sup> In 1771, Mr. Cameron published "The Catholic Christian Defended, in a Letter to the Rev. Benj. M'Dowel, by Philalethes." In the same year, Mr. M'Dowel's "Second Letter to the Rev. J——n C——n" made its appearance. In 1772, Mr. Cameron published "Theophilus and Philander, a Dialogue, containing remarks on the Rev. B. M'Dowel's second letter." To this Mr. M'Dowel replied, in "Observations on Theophilus and Philander, addressed to the public." Some time afterwards, two other pamphlets issued from the press—the one anonymous, and entitled, "The First Article of the Westminster Confession examined and found not agreeable, but contrary to the Holy Scriptures"—the other, "Some Important Queries, addressed to the Protestant Dissenters in the North of Ireland. By the Rev. Alexander Colville, M.D." In 1774, Mr. M'Dowel replied to both these productions, in a large pamphlet, entitled, "A Vindication of the Westminster Confession of Faith."

<sup>7</sup> These facts are expressly stated in "Letters of Importance," by Pisto-philos Philecclesia (supposed to be Mr. M'Dowel), published before the annual meeting of the synod of Ulster in 1775. See the "Letters," pp. 23 and 25.

observance of the synod's law; and the heterodox majority, restrained from urging its abrogation by the dread of kindling the torch of ecclesiastical discord in their own congregations, were content that it should continue a dead letter. A transaction which, at this period, created no small degree of excitement in a certain district of the county of Down, illustrates the procedure of the respective parties. Mr. Samuel Martin Stephenson, a licentiate of the presbytery of Templepatrick, had received a call from the people of Greyabbey, but some of the members of the presbytery of Bangor, with which the congregation was connected, entertained doubts as to his soundness in the faith, and their suspicions were aggravated by his positive refusal to subscribe the Westminster Confession.<sup>8</sup> Several ministers, therefore, scrupled to concur in his appointment, and his settlement was, in consequence, delayed; but, in the meantime, the people became impatient, and threatened to join either the southern association or the presbytery of Antrim. The presbytery now determined to go on with his ordination, and, notwithstanding the dissent of six of their number<sup>9</sup> regularly entered on the minutes, Mr. Stephenson was invested with the pastoral charge of the congregation on the 20th June 1774.<sup>10</sup> When the synod met,

<sup>8</sup> Mr. Stephenson's license is reported to the synod in 1768. (MS. Minutes.) He himself states, that he did not subscribe the confession on that occasion. ("Review," p. 6.) It would seem that, prior to the time of his ordination, the synod's formula had, by some management, been set aside in the presbytery of Bangor, and another of an equivocal character substituted. The formula presented to Mr. Stephenson was the following:—"I believe that all the important doctrines of the Christian religion are contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith." A Jew or Unitarian might have subscribed this declaration; but Mr. Stephenson, knowing that, if he annexed his signature, he would be represented as a Calvinist, declined to affix his name even to this ambiguous statement. "Review," p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> The six dissentients were Messrs. Cunningham of Comber, Alexander of Castlereagh, Huey of Newtownards, Laird of Belfast, Kinhead of Killinchy, and King of Holywood. Mr. Stephenson published several pamphlets in his own vindication, which were answered, on the part of the presbytery of Belfast, by Mr. King, assisted by Mr. Huey.

<sup>10</sup> Having subsequently spent two sessions at Glasgow, and obtained the degree of M.D., Mr. Stephenson resigned the charge of the Greyabbey con-



a few days afterwards, at Antrim, the ordination was sustained, and it was arranged that the dissentient members should be erected into a new judicatory, under the designation of the presbytery of Belfast. For more than fifty years afterwards, the presbytery of Bangor continued to license and ordain without any reference to the confession, whilst the presbytery of Belfast insisted strictly upon subscription.

The agrarian disturbances which now frequently troubled various districts of the North of Ireland, and in which not a few of the peasantry under the care of the synod of Ulster were implicated, supplied humiliating evidence that religion was losing its hold upon the minds and hearts of the population. Armed bands of misguided individuals, calling themselves *Hearts of Oak* and *Hearts of Steel*, traversed the country, administered unlawful oaths, dictated terms as to rents and tithes to the proprietors, and perpetrated many other acts of insubordination and outrage. The members of the General Synod zealously endeavoured to reduce the lawless multitude to obedience; ministers delivered exhortations from the pulpits, and presbyteries published addresses in the newspapers, but years passed away before the evil was eradicated. On the 6th of March 1772, the Rev. Samuel Morell, the Presbyterian minister of Tullylish, fell a victim to the violence of the Hearts of Oak. The house of Sir Richard Johnston of Gilford, a landed proprietor residing in his neighbourhood, was attacked, and Mr. Morell hastened to the spot, that he might assist in its defence, if he failed, by the weight of his personal and official influence, to arrest the fury of the assailants; but, as he stood exposed before a window, he received a gun-shot wound which proved fatal.<sup>11</sup>

gregation in 1785, and settled in Belfast as a medical practitioner. The present eminent Belfast physician of the same name is the son of this gentleman.

<sup>11</sup> Mr. Morell was shot about four o'clock in the afternoon, in the twenty-eighth year of his age. In the Presbyterian church of Tullylish, an inscription, on a handsome tablet, describes the circumstances of his death. The concluding words are—"His particular friend, Sir Richard Johnston, Baronet, who loved him living and regrets him dead, hath caused this monument to be erected to his memory." Mr. Morell was the grand-uncle of the

It cannot be said that all these riotous proceedings were unprovoked. Poverty pressed heavily upon the lower class of farmers, and many of them were goaded almost to desperation by the hardships of unequal laws, or by the inconsiderate and oppressive arrangements of their landlords. The supremacy of legal authority was speedily asserted, but as many of the grievances of which the peasantry complained remained without redress, they continued to murmur and to meditate sedition. Thousands of them sought a home on the other side of the Atlantic,<sup>12</sup> and a few years afterwards appeared in arms against the mother country as assertors of the independence of the American republic.

Not a few of the Presbyterian ministers of the northern province had now to struggle against the discouragements of a slender and decreasing maintenance. Some of the members of the synod of Ulster resigned their pastoral charges, and joined the stream of emigration to America. Several of the ministers of the secession felt themselves shut up to the same alternative. In an application, made in May 1774, to the higher judicatory in Scotland, the two Irish Antiburgher presbyteries speak of "the necessitous and distressful circumstances of several of their brethren through want of a due subsistence from their congregations," and ask a discretionary power "to grant permission to their members to go to America." The synod, unwilling, perhaps, to facilitate the withdrawal of ministers from their present spheres of usefulness, declined to accede to the request of the petitioners.<sup>13</sup>

Rev. J. H. Morell of Ballibay, and of the Rev. Charles L. Morell of Dunganannon.

<sup>12</sup> It was computed that, in 1773 and the five preceding years, the North of Ireland, by emigration to the American settlements, was "drained of one-fourth of its trading cash, and of the like proportion of the manufacturing people." ("Historical Collections relative to the Town of Belfast," p. 114.) "Most of the early successes in America were immediately owing," says Plowden, "to the vigorous exertions and prowess of the Irish emigrants, chiefly from the North, who bore arms in that cause." "Historical Review," vol. i. p. 458.

<sup>13</sup> "Secession Records." In 1773, Mr. Martin of Bangor (or Newtownards) removed to America.

Whilst Irish Presbyterians, as well pastors as people, were in these depressed circumstances, the course of events was, notwithstanding, gradually increasing their social importance. Prior to 1768, the lord-lieutenant generally visited Ireland only when parliament was sitting, or but once every two years; and, during his absence, the government was entrusted to lords-justices, among whom the Primate of Armagh, or the Archbishop of Dublin, was usually enrolled. The Presbyterians could expect little favour in high places so long as one of their rulers was the leader of a rival sect, who believed that almost the very existence of his Church depended upon the preservation of its political ascendancy. When Lord Townshend was made chief governor, a new system was introduced. Three or four of the great landed proprietors had hitherto been able to exert such an amount of parliamentary influence, that, by a coalition of interests, they could oblige the existing ministry virtually to submit to their dictation; but the new governor was instructed to live constantly in Ireland, that, by a judicious distribution of court favours, he might augment the direct authority of the crown, and break the power of a formidable aristocracy. By this arrangement the Presbyterians were relieved from the humiliating necessity of approaching their civil rulers through the intervention of a functionary of another Church, and were brought into immediate communication with a resident nobleman who was comparatively free from ecclesiastical prejudices. The Octennial Act, which was added to the statute-book during the first year of the administration of Lord Townshend, increased, at the same time, their political consideration. The death of the reigning sovereign had of late been the only circumstance which led necessarily to the dissolution of the Irish parliament, and as a seat in the House of Commons might thus continue as long as the natural life of the member, the will of the people was often very little regarded by their representatives. But this act, by limiting the duration of parliaments to eight years, induced a greater respect for public opinion; and as Presbyterians formed an overwhelming majority of the Ulster freeholders, the importance of attending to their wishes was not overlooked by those who were desirous of repre-

senting northern constituencies.<sup>14</sup> Their enrolment, as volunteers, soon after the general election of 1776, was, however, the grand secret of their political influence. When England was contending with the American colonies, so many troops were sent abroad, that the North of Ireland was left almost destitute of military protection; and when France declared on the side of the revolted provinces, her ships of war appeared in the British seas, and threatened a descent upon the coasts of Ulster. The people were, in consequence, obliged to take measures for their own defence. The northern Protestants<sup>15</sup> formed themselves into companies, elected their own officers, provided themselves with military accoutrements, and accustomed themselves to martial exercises. The volunteer companies soon combined, appeared together in thousands at reviews, and exhibited the imposing spectacle of a great and well-equipped army. At their meetings they discussed the politics of the day, passed patriotic resolutions, agreed upon petitions to the legislature urging the adoption of their sentiments, and signified their determination to exert their united energies for the redress of the wrongs of their country. The existence of an extensive military organisation,

<sup>14</sup> James Wilson, Esq., in his address to the freeholders of the county of Antrim, prior to the general election of 1776, made the following most extraordinary proposal:—"As soon as I shall know of an intention to enact any new law, or repeal or amend an old one, I shall, without loss of time, give public notice thereof to my constituents, by an advertisement in the *Belfast News-Letter*. Then let the ministers, or any other persons in the several Protestant congregations in the county, on the *Sunday* following, inform the congregations, by advertisement or otherwise, of the design of the legislature, and desire a meeting of the freeholders, on the first convenient day, to give their opinion of the intended measure, which, when transmitted to me by post, shall regulate my parliamentary conduct." In these palmy days of New-Light ascendancy, the doctrine of Sabbath observance was but little regarded. By throwing himself almost entirely upon Presbyterian support, Mr. Wilson, though a gentleman of but small property, carried his election in opposition to the combined efforts of the most influential of the old aristocracy. He was the son of Hill Wilson, Esq., mayor of Carrickfergus in 1753.

<sup>15</sup> When the volunteer companies were first formed in Ulster, Roman Catholics were not permitted to join their ranks.



over which the state has no control, is a political anomaly, which, under ordinary circumstances, no prudent government should tolerate; and though the Irish executive at first patronised this movement, the appearance which it speedily assumed began to awaken much anxiety. But the volunteers were everywhere applauded as the guardians of Ireland, and, in its present critical condition, the administration did not deem it expedient to take any step calculated to repress the popular enthusiasm. The volunteers maintained their existence about fifteen years,<sup>16</sup> and as, in the North, the greater number of both officers and men were Presbyterians,<sup>17</sup> the claims of the Church with which they were connected obtained, during this interval, special attention from the legislature.

In June 1778, or about three months after the first appearance of the volunteers, a vigorous attempt was made in the Irish House of Commons to remove a grievance of which the Presbyterians had long complained. There were then very few regular troops in the country, and government began to fear, that as the people were extremely discontented, they might be seduced, by the example of the American colonies, to throw off their allegiance. It was accordingly considered prudent to make an effort for the conciliation of the Roman Catholics, who formed the bulk of the population; and, with this view, a bill was brought into the Irish parliament to relieve them of some of their disabilities. The provision relative to the Sacramental Test formed part of a statute for the discouragement of Popery,<sup>18</sup> and it was now very reasonably proposed that a clause for its repeal should be inserted in the contemplated enactment. On the motion of Sir Edward New-

<sup>16</sup> In March 1778, the first volunteer company originated at Belfast. In March 1793, the volunteers ceased to parade, or any longer to appear in military array. "Historical Collections relative to the Town of Belfast," pp. 138 and 418.

<sup>17</sup> Many Presbyterians had now acquired wealth in Ulster by means of the linen trade, and the northern volunteers frequently elected these opulent members of their own Church as their officers, in preference to the Episcopal gentry.

<sup>18</sup> See chap. xxii., note 27, and the text.

enham, M.P. for the county of Dublin, supported by many of the representatives of Presbyterian constituencies, such a clause was accordingly appended; but on the return of the bill from England, where it had been sent that it might obtain the sanction of the privy-council, it was found that the addition had been obliterated. When this announcement was made to the Irish legislature, several members commented most indignantly on the erasure; and the eloquent Grattan publicly charged the supporters of the government with having insincerely consented to the introduction of the clause, merely that the bill might, in the first instance, pass the more easily through the lower house of parliament. "When it came back," said he, "the bait was taken off, and the naked hook discovered." The bill, as returned from England, obtained, with considerable difficulty,<sup>19</sup> the consent of the commons, and, almost immediately afterwards, the Irish parliament was prorogued.

This was the last great effort of intolerance for the maintenance of an unrighteous law. In the course of the debate, prior to the final reading of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill, some of its most influential advocates pledged themselves to support a separate measure for the repeal of the Test Act. It was urged, as an argument against the concession, that the English nonconformists would forthwith claim a similar indulgence; and, in other times, this consideration would, doubtless, have induced British statesmen to continue to tamper with the feelings of Irish Presbyterians; but the perilous condition of the country soon convinced them of the inexpediency of a system of procrastination. During the long recess of parliament, from August 1778 to October 1779, the volunteers rapidly increased, and when it

<sup>19</sup> The motion for passing it, as it was returned from England, was carried by 129 against 91. On this occasion, Mr. Wilson, one of the members for Antrim, Mr. Robert Stewart, one of the members for Down, Sir Richard Johnston, and others, animadverted keenly upon the omission of the disputed clause. A list of the division may be found in the *Belfast News-Letter* of August 14, 1778. Mr. Grattan, in his letter to Mr. Fox, dated Dublin, April 18, 1782, speaks of the omission as "an alteration to vex the Presbyterians made by the bishops." "Life of Grattan," by his son, vol. ii. p. 245.

reassembled, they amounted to 42,000 men.<sup>20</sup> Discontent had become, meanwhile, more intense, as the trade of the country had been nearly ruined by the war with America; and the people began to make political demands, in a tone which inspired the government with the most serious apprehensions. Policy suggested the propriety of attending to the claims of the most powerful class of Irish Protestants. On the 12th of October 1779, the very first day of the next session of parliament, Sir Edward Newenham moved for leave to bring in a bill for the relief of the dissenters. The measure, when submitted to the commons, obtained their unanimous approval; and to do it greater honour, the bill was carried up to the castle by the speaker, in company with the house, for presentation to the lord-lieutenant. The delay which now followed created no little uneasiness. Other bills, which had obtained the sanction of the commons at a later period, had, meanwhile, been returned from England; but, on the 24th of December, government acknowledged, in answer to a question by a northern member, that this bill had not yet been forwarded to London. At length, on the 11th of March 1780, it was announced that it had been returned unaltered, and, as soon afterwards as the forms of parliament would conveniently admit, it passed into a law.<sup>21</sup> Government, however, received little credit for a measure which had been so long denied, and which was now so ungraciously conceded; and the Presbyterians felt that they were indebted for this piece of tardy justice, not so much to the enlightened wisdom of fraternal rulers, as to the brilliant array of their own armed advocates.<sup>22</sup>

The strength of the volunteers continued steadily to increase, and, on the 15th of February 1782, a meeting of the association, more influential than any that had hitherto been held, assembled at Dungannon.<sup>23</sup> The representatives of one hundred and forty-

<sup>20</sup> Plowden's "Historical Review," vol. i. p. 492.

<sup>21</sup> In the Irish Statute-Book, it is the 19th and 20th of George III., chap. vi.

<sup>22</sup> It is rather remarkable that the repeal of the Test Act is not even mentioned in any minute of the synod of Ulster drawn up about this period.

<sup>23</sup> This was the place where the synod of Ulster then most frequently as-

three corps appeared in military dress at the convention, and passed resolutions indicative of their determination to maintain the principles of constitutional freedom. On that memorable day, the Presbyterians of the North<sup>24</sup> boldly asserted the independence of the Irish legislature, and proclaimed their joy at the relaxation of the penal laws affecting their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects. This demonstration added immensely to the public excitement. The Dungannon resolutions were at once adopted with enthusiasm by the volunteers all over the country; and, as government still refused to yield to the popular demands, Ireland seemed to be fast approaching the crisis of a terrible convulsion. There were now only 5000 regular troops in the kingdom, whilst the volunteers, who amounted to nearly 100,000 men, well armed and disciplined, were united and exasperated.<sup>25</sup> Mr. Grattan, the leader of the popular party in the House of Commons, had given notice that he would bring forward a motion relative to the rights of the nation on the 16th of April, and had succeeded in carrying a resolution requiring the speaker to summon all the members to attend on the occasion. A great meeting of the volunteers of the province of Leinster was to take place in Dublin on the following day, to deliberate on "the claims of the country." The Irish parliament, which had long been little better than a court for the registration of the wishes of a narrow-minded aristocracy,<sup>26</sup> quailed before the threatened danger, and the lord-lieutenant, in despair, sent in his resignation to the British minister.

Before the bearer of this communication from the representa-

sembled. During the eighteenth century, it met twenty-fives times at Dungannon, twenty-four times at Lurgan, twenty-three at Antrim, fourteen at Belfast, five at Magherafelt, five at Derry, two at Ballymena, and two at Armagh. On this occasion, the volunteers met in the parish church.

<sup>24</sup> In the *Belfast News-Letter* of the 22d of February 1782, it is stated, that the Dungannon meeting was "composed *almost entirely* of dissenters."

<sup>25</sup> "Life of Grattan," by his son, vol. ii. p. 226.

<sup>26</sup> Of 300 members composing the House of Commons, only 72 were returned by the free election of the people. Fifty-three peers nominated 124 members, and influenced the choice of ten; and fifty-two commoners nominated ninety-one, and influenced the choice of three.



tive of majesty in Ireland reached his destination, Lord North had ceased to be the premier of England. An administration, headed by the Marquis of Rockingham, was now formed, and the Duke of Portland was appointed to the Irish viceroyalty. Though the new government was favourable to the extension of popular liberty, it at first hesitated to accede to the demands of the volunteers. But the case admitted of no compromise. In a letter, dated Dublin Castle, April 28, 1782, the Irish chief governor says plainly to the English secretary of state, "If you delay or refuse to be liberal, government cannot exist here in its present form; and the sooner you recal your lord-licutenant, and renounce all claim to this country, the better."<sup>27</sup> In this emergency the English government prudently resolved to yield. The parliament of Ireland was relieved from the odious supervision of the English privy-council, the legislative independence of the country was acknowledged, and various other measures, calculated to appease the public discontent, were legally confirmed.

Amongst the acts now passed, one which originated with Colonel James Stewart, M.P. for the county of Tyrone, deserves particular notice. This act declares the validity of all marriages celebrated among Protestant dissenters by ministers of their own denomination. Some of the hardships experienced by Irish Presbyterians, in consequence of the unsettled state of the law, have already been described;<sup>28</sup> but though the necessity for legislation could not be denied, the High Church party struggled to the last against the proposed enactment. On the 3d of May 1782, when the Marriage Bill was read a second time in the Irish House of Lords, it met with the most resolute opposition. When a motion for its immediate committal was carried, by a majority of thirty-five to twenty-three, a specious but sophistical protest, signed by three archbishops, ten bishops, and nine temporal peers, was entered on the journals.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> This letter, from the Duke of Portland to Mr. Fox, may be found at length in "Grattan's Life," by his son, vol. ii. pp. 272-75.

<sup>28</sup> Chap. xxi. and chap. xxii., note 2, and the text.

<sup>29</sup> This protest may be found in Mant's "History of the Church of Ireland," vol. ii. pp. 675-78. The act is the 21st and 22d of George III.,

The Seceders had long complained of the annoyances to which they were exposed on account of their refusal to conform to the common mode of swearing by kissing the Gospels. Several attempts to obtain a legislative remedy had proved unsuccessful; but a bill, brought into the House of Commons by the Right Honourable John O'Neill and the Honourable Isaac Corry during this session of parliament, passed without much difficulty. The relief afforded by this measure was, however, only partial. The act states, that "from and after the 1st day of August 1782, every Seceder shall, instead of the usual form, be permitted to take oath by holding up the right hand, as the sign of an oath, and by repeating the words, 'I do solemnly and sincerely swear before Almighty God;'" but it provides that "no Seceder shall be qualified or admitted to give evidence in any criminal causes, or serve on any juries, or bear any place, office, or employment of trust under the crown."<sup>30</sup>

The vigour with which government supported the Marriage Bill, in opposition to the strenuous resistance of the established hierarchy, as well as its prompt approval of the measure for the relief of the Seceders, contributed much to the popularity of the administration of the Duke of Portland; but the new lord-lieutenant had been only a few weeks in this country when he was convinced of the propriety of taking some further and more decisive steps to conciliate the Irish Presbyterians. They constituted a very large section of the Protestant population;<sup>31</sup> they

chap. xxv. When the bill was under the consideration of the House of Lords, the Irish lord-chancellor declared, that marriages celebrated by Presbyterian ministers were already valid in point of law. The act merely put their validity beyond doubt. By an act of the United Parliament, passed in 1844, the 7th and 8th of Victoria, chap. 81, an Irish Presbyterian minister may now celebrate any marriage between a Presbyterian and a member of the Established Church, or of any other denomination.

<sup>30</sup> In the Irish Statute-Book this act is the 21st and 22d of George III., chap. lvii. In 1838, James Gibson, Esq., then M.P. for Belfast, rendered an important service, as well to the Irish Presbyterian Church as to the community at large, by obtaining an act legalising any oath taken, either in civil or criminal cases, according to the form which the person swearing conscientiously approves. The act is the 1st and 2d of Victoria, chap. cv.

<sup>31</sup> In a debate in the British House of Peers, on the 11th of May 1779, the

generally noted for their intelligence, and some of them were rich and influential; they were the very soul of the volunteers, and their ministers were the most effective speakers when the armed patriots assembled for deliberation. Though they had approved themselves the best friends of the house of Hanover, they had reason to complain that they had never received the encouragement to which they were entitled; for whilst the High Church party, who would have connived at the exclusion of the reigning family from the throne, had been fostered with especial care, they had often been studiously neglected. At the great Dungannon meeting, they had evinced a disposition to insist upon the emancipation of their Roman Catholic countrymen; and if these two sections of the Irish people united their strength, it was plain that, in the existing state of the kingdom, their combined power would be irresistible. The Duke of Portland accordingly determined to cultivate a good understanding with the Presbyterians, and to treat them with generosity and confidence. The condition of their ministers suggested one mode in which he might readily carry out his policy. They were generally in straitened circumstances, and though, as their numbers increased, the share of Royal Bounty enjoyed by each had been continually diminishing, yet, since the commencement of the reign of George I., they had not received any addition to their endowment. The lord-lieutenant therefore resolved to propose its augmentation. Several members of parliament, in the confidence of the ministry, entered warmly into the views of the chief governor, and it was considered that a vote of the Irish House of Commons would be the best and most popular method of introducing the arrangement. In a letter of the 25th of June 1782,

Marquis of Rockingham stated that "the people of Ireland, by the most accurate computation, amounted to 2,300,000 souls, whereof 500,000 were believed to be Protestants, in the proportion of 300,000 Dissenters to 200,000 of the Established Church." (Plowden's "Historical Review," vol. i., appendix, p. 315. In 1787, Woodward, bishop of Cloyne, asserts that the members of the Established Church were somewhat more numerous than the Presbyterians. His words are—"In Ireland, the Protestants are *not one-fourth* of the people; the members of the Establishment *little more than one-eighth*." "Present State of the Church of Ireland," sixth edition, p. 73.

addressed to the moderator of the synod of Ulster, Mr. James Lang, their agent, states that "Mr. Charles King (M.P. for the borough of Swords), in conjunction with other gentlemen, who, he hopes, will give them their assistance, means to try whether an address of the house to his majesty may not be procured for an addition to the present Royal Bounty."<sup>32</sup>

The death of the Marquis of Rockingham, on the 1st of July 1782, led almost immediately to the dissolution of the ministry, so that the intentions of the Duke of Portland, relative to the *Regium Donum*, were not carried into execution. The Irish parliament was prorogued soon after the demise of the late premier, and, in the following summer, the whole country was thrown into a state of extreme excitement by a general election. On this occasion the volunteers turned the scale in several of the northern constituencies. Two candidates, supported by what was called the independent interest, were returned for the county of Antrim; and the Earl of Hertford, one of its great landed proprietors, was still farther mortified by the signal defeat of both his nominees for the borough of Lisburn—a place in which it was supposed that his interest was impregnable.<sup>33</sup> The county of Down was the scene of a violent and protracted struggle. Lord Kilwarlin, son of the Earl of Hillsborough, was put forward by his father and the old aristocracy; the Honourable Edward Ward of Castleward, and Mr. Robert Stewart of Newtownards, were the popular candidates. Mr. Stewart was himself an extensive proprietor, and, as he was a steady member of the Presbyterian Church, he calculated on the suffrages of the Presbyterian freeholders; so that, though he was by no means a favourite with most of the great families of the county, he conceived that he might safely bid defiance to their united opposition. But the event demonstrated that he had overrated his influence. Whilst he declined

<sup>32</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod for 1782.

<sup>33</sup> At the general election of 1783, the Honourable Hercules Rowley and the Right Honourable John O'Neill were returned for the county of Antrim; and, after a short contest, Captain William Todd Jones and Colonel Sharman, father of William Sharman Crawford, Esq., late M.P. for Reechdale, were elected for the borough of Lisburn.



to solicit the support of the Earl of Hillsborough, he refused to form a junction with Mr. Ward; and thus, whilst he was unsupported by the most powerful nobleman connected with the county, he disobliged some of the friends of the "independent interest." At the commencement of the struggle, the freeholders of one or two of the largest Presbyterian congregations in Down declared on the side of Lord Kilwarlin. The Seceders, who had now a considerable interest in this part of Ulster, looked with little favour on a candidate who was connected with the presbytery of Antrim, and who was understood to be an abettor of the New-Light theology. The Earl of Hillsborough had shielded them when brought into difficulties in regard to the oath of abjuration, and several of their leading ministers now testified their gratitude by voting with the party of their protector. Many of the members of the synod of Ulster exerted themselves to the uttermost in behalf of Mr. Stewart, but his own manner, which was rather cold and distant, did not add to the number of his friends; and, after a contest of twenty-three days' continuance, he was ousted from the representation.<sup>34</sup>

The general election was not quite over when a second great meeting of the volunteers assembled at Dungannon, on the 8th of September 1783. The delegates of two hundred and seventy-two companies appeared, and Colonel James Stewart of Killymoon presided over the deliberations. The business, which only occupied a single day, was transacted in the Presbyterian meet-

<sup>34</sup> At the close of the poll, the numbers were—For Lord Kilwarlin, 2831, for Mr. Ward, 2071, for Mr. Stewart, 1957. Mr. Stewart had represented the county in the two preceding parliaments. In 1789, he was elevated to the peerage, and died Marquis of Londonderry in 1821. Until his death he continued a member of the congregation of Newtownards, in connection with the presbytery of Antrim. His defeat at the great election of 1783 was attributed at the time to High Church influence. The *Belfast News-Letter* of September 9, 1783, ascribes it to "his being one of the stubborn sect of dissenters." The clergy of the Established Church, almost without exception, voted against him. Towards the close of the contest, when Lord Kilwarlin's seat was secure, the adherents of the Hillsborough family gave their second votes to Mr. Ward, who was less obnoxious to the old aristocracy of the county than Mr. Stewart, and thus defeated the Presbyterian candidate.

ing-house. The representatives deputed to attend included several individuals of distinction, and, among the rest, the Right Reverend the Earl of Bristol, lord-bishop of Derry,<sup>35</sup> and fifteen members of the new House of Commons. Having achieved the legislative independence of Ireland, the volunteers now demanded

<sup>35</sup> This prelate, who was translated from Cloyne in 1768, and who occupied the see of Derry about thirty-five years, was one of the most eccentric characters of his age. Though he could "drink a bottle of Madeira with his dinner, and swear like a gentleman," (Mrs. Carter's "Letters," vol. ii. p. 52), he had the address to impose on the venerable John Wesley, who describes him as "exemplary in all parts of public worship, and plenteous in good works." ("Journal," 1775, June 6.) He subscribed, with equal promptitude and generosity, to the erection of Episcopal churches, Presbyterian meeting-houses, and Romish chapels. At one period he seems to have been nearly as great a favourite with the Presbyterian ministers as he was with the founder of Methodism, and they proposed to appoint him one of the trustees of their Widows' Fund. Bishop Mant ("History of the Church of Ireland," vol. ii. pp. 692, 693) quotes an absurd address presented to him by the presbytery of Derry, and not very unjustly describes its "composition" as "below criticism;" but the perspicacious prelate might have seen that it has been additionally disfigured by the accidental omission of one or two important words, and it unfortunately happens that the very sentence in which the right reverend historian condemns it, is itself one of the most awkward pieces of "composition" in the English language. The Earl of Bristol spent most of his time in Italy, so that, for a considerable period, his real character was not generally known in this country. About the end of the year 1783, his conduct was so seditious, that the Irish government seriously contemplated his arrest. "That he was not recalled by authority to residence in his diocese, may perhaps," says Bishop Mant (vol. ii. p. 695), "excite some astonishment. There is, however, reason to think that his ecclesiastical superiors, aware as they were of the extravagance of his mind and conduct, and of the difficulty of laying him under any effectual restraint, judged his absence from Ireland less mischievous than his presence." He spent most of the latter years of his life at Naples, where he was for some time in imprisonment. The author of the "Life and Times of Lady Huntingdon" remarks, that "his connection with the profligate Lady Hamilton, and his lordship's letter to her, published in her 'Memoirs,' merit the severest reprehension." (Vol. ii. p. 195. "His irregularities were so strange," says Lord Cloncurry, "as to render any story that might be told about him credible, and, of course, to cause the invention of many, that, in reference to any other person, would be incredible. . . . The bishop was taken suddenly ill on a journey from Albano to Rome, and died in the outhouse of a cottage, to which he was car-

parliamentary reform. To secure the accomplishment of their object, they appointed a national convention to meet in Dublin in November; and having chosen five deputies from each county of Ulster to represent them in the proposed assembly, they invited the other three provinces to send forward delegates. Their call was obeyed, and, towards the end of the year 1783, Ireland witnessed the strange spectacle of a parliament and an armed convention sitting contemporaneously in the same metropolis. Such a state of things could not be long tolerated. The House of Commons resented the attempt to overbear it by intimidation, and, after remaining together for a few weeks, the convention, with the full concurrence of its president, the Earl of Charlemont, quietly adopted a motion for an indefinite adjournment.

Such was the state of public affairs when the Rev. Dr. Campbell of Armagh arrived in Dublin, to apply, on behalf of the synod of Ulster, for an augmentation of the *Regium Donum*. By some mistake the letter to the moderator of 1782, acquainting him with the intention of Mr. Charles King to propose a vote in the House of Commons recommending the enlargement of the grant, did not reach its destination until after the close of the annual meeting; and when its contents became known, the change of ministry had completely unsettled all previous arrangements.<sup>36</sup> The synod of 1783 met on the eve of the general election. At such a juncture it was deemed inexpedient to approach government, but the proposal of Mr. King was considered; the moderator was instructed to write to that gentleman, thank-

ried, in consequence of the unwillingness of the peasants to admit a heretic prelate to die under their roof. I took charge of the wreck of his property at Rome, and was enabled to save it for his heirs." "Personal Recollections," by Valentine, Lord Cloncurry, p. 191.

<sup>36</sup> Disappointed at not receiving some letters expected from Dublin, relative to the Widows' Fund and other matters, the synod of 1782 appointed a committee to examine them, should they afterwards come to hand. The committee state, when replying to Mr. Lang, the agent, in reference to the proposal of Mr. King, that "the body knew nothing of that interesting business when they appointed us to examine their papers." It is obvious from these words that the suggestion regarding an increase of the bounty did not, on this occasion, originate with the synod.

ing him for his friendly intentions ; and it was agreed that one of the brethren should enter into a correspondence, on the subject of the contemplated grant, with the southern association. Shortly after the opening of parliament, the synod's fixed committee met at Dungannon, and Dr. Campbell was then entrusted with his present commission. Acting in concert with Mr. Benjamin McDowel, now one of the ministers of Dublin,<sup>37</sup> and guided by the advice of Colonel Stewart<sup>38</sup> of Killymoon, the steady friend of the northern Presbyterians, he obtained an audience of Lord Northington, the lord-lieutenant, and forwarded, through his Excellency, a memorial to the king, stating the claims of the ministers of the synod of Ulster. Dr. Campbell, who was a highly accomplished minister,<sup>39</sup> and who was treated with great kindness by the chief governor, was soon convinced

<sup>37</sup> Mr. McDowel was removed from Ballykelly to Mary's Abbey, Dublin, in 1778. He was succeeded in Ballykelly by the Rev. Robert Rentoul, author of "The Modes of Presbyterian Church Worship vindicated, in a Letter to the Blacksmith."

<sup>38</sup> In his report to the annual meeting of synod at Magherafelt in 1784, Dr. Campbell also acknowledges the assistance he received from Lord Charlemont, Lord Templeton, Mr. Grattan, Mr. George Ogle, Colonel Rowley, Colonel Dawson, and Major Skeffington. MS. Minutes of Synod for 1784.

<sup>39</sup> This distinguished man, who was born in Newry, and a branch of one of its most respectable families, was licensed to preach by the presbytery of Armagh in 1750. After completing his collegiate education at Glasgow, he accompanied the family of Mr. Bagwell of Clonmel to France, where he spent seven years. He could speak the language of that country with so much fluency and correctness, that he was mistaken for a native. On one occasion, in consequence of his refusal to kneel in the streets of Paris, when he met the host, borne in procession, he was thrown into prison ; and as he refused to plead, by way of apology, that he was ignorant of the nature of the ceremony, the English ambassador was obliged to interfere before the French authorities would consent to his liberation. In 1759, he became connected with the presbytery of Antrim, as minister of the congregation over which Abernethy and Duchal had previously presided ; but, on his removal from Antrim to Armagh, in 1764, he returned to the synod of Ulster. He was long one of its leading ministers. About the year 1784, he obtained the degree of D.D. from the University of Glasgow. He had a singularly tenacious memory, and possessed extensive and varied learning. In 1789, he removed to Clonmel, where he died, Nov. 17, 1805. See Stuart's "Armagh," pp. 493-98.



that his Excellency was well disposed to entertain the application; but it appeared in a short time that there were other influential parties who did not regard it with equal favour. During the late general election, the members of the synod had grievously offended several of the nobility of Ulster, particularly the Earl of Hillsborough, who had recently held the high office of one of the principal secretaries of state for Great Britain. These courtiers strenuously resisted the proposed augmentation of *Regium Donum*. Lord Northington sent for Dr. Campbell, and candidly mentioned the obstacles in the way of his success. He stated that, according to a report current at court, the North of Ireland was in "a disturbed state, and ready to break the peace of the kingdom," and that "very unfavourable representations had been made of the ministers of the synod of Ulster." Dr. Campbell was permitted to enter fully into a vindication of the proceedings of his brethren, and refuted the charges preferred against them so clearly, in the course of several interviews to which he was admitted, that the lord-lieutenant declared he was "fully satisfied" with his explanations. "The principles which you advocate," said his Excellency, "are the true old Whig principles I revere, and I wish you to support the character of your forefathers." In the end, the mission of Dr. Campbell was not altogether unsuccessful. After some delay, Lord Northington informed him that "the king's letter was come over, with a grant of one thousand pounds a year."<sup>40</sup>

Though this was the largest augmentation of Royal Bounty that had ever yet been granted, the announcement of its amount created much disappointment. It had transpired that the Duke of Portland had recommended an increase of from £5000 to

<sup>40</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod for 1784. Dr. Campbell was detained upwards of three months in Dublin at this time. The king's letter is dated 7th January 1784, but some delay seems to have taken place before it reached the lord-lieutenant. The memorial to the king, which is dated 20th December 1783, states that the *Regium Donum* did not then produce nine pounds to each minister. In confirmation of the facts stated in the text, see also "Substance of Two Speeches," by Dr. Black, p. 64, and Dickson's "Narrative," p. 291, note.

£10,000 per annum,<sup>41</sup> and on the supposition that the application to the king did not meet with an absolute refusal, Dr. Campbell had all along been reckoning on such an addition. When the intelligence communicated in the royal letter was conveyed to him, he candidly expressed his regret that the amount was so much below what he had anticipated, and the lord-lieutenant as candidly acknowledged that "a larger sum had been intended, but that it was opposed by men of power in this kingdom with whom the public business was transacted."<sup>42</sup>

Whilst these "men of power" were thus rather ungraciously interfering to cripple the resources of the ministers of the synod of Ulster, they were not unmindful of another section of the Irish Presbyterian Church. The jealousy subsisting between the members of the General Synod and the associate body was not unknown to the Earl of Hillsborough; neither was he forgetful of the services rendered by the Seceders of Down to his son, Lord Kilwarlin, at the recent election. Aware that he could at once mortify his opponents and serve his friends by procuring a grant to the seceding ministers, he prevailed upon the king to confer on them a bounty of £500 per annum.<sup>43</sup> Thus, within

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Black states ("Substance of Two Speeches," &c., p. 63), that the sum proposed was £5000. Dr. Dickson asserts ("Narrative," p. 291, and "Retractions," p. 90), that it was £10,000. A letter, written apparently by a minister who had attended the synod at Magherafelt, and dated July 10, 1784, seems to support the assertion of Dr. Dickson. The writer says—"Dr. Campbell declared that he would have rejected with contempt that paltry sum of £1000 that was granted, only he was informed by his best friends that the king had, in the most gracious manner, given all that was demanded, [and] that he would have given *ten times the sum* if the enemies on this side the water would have suffered it to be asked." The letter, from which these words are taken, is published in the *Belfast Mercury* of July 23, 1784. This newspaper was established in the month of August 1783, but was soon discontinued.

<sup>42</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod for 1784. It is said that Lord Hillsborough at this time was able to influence from twelve to fourteen votes in the Irish House of Commons. The members subject to his dictation were known as "the Hillsborough club."

<sup>43</sup> Dr. Dickson's "Narrative," p. 291. The secession ministers now amounted to about thirty-seven. The dividend of each was somewhat above

less than forty years after the ordination of its first minister, the Irish Secession Church was encouraged by princely patronage.

As this grant was the common property of the associate ministers, whether Burghers or Antiburghers, the two parties had occasion to meet together to make arrangements for its distribution. They had evinced an anxiety, some time before, to remove the barriers by which they had so long been separated, and their desire of union was increased when they assembled at once to congratulate each other on this token of regal favour, and to share its substantial benefits. They now agreed to hold conferences with a view to the adjustment of their differences, and they soon approximated so closely, that, at a particular meeting, all the elders, without exception, and all the ministers but one, were prepared to consent to certain terms of accommodation.<sup>44</sup> At this crisis the Scottish Antiburgher Synod interposed, and interdicted the agreement. The three Irish Burgher presbyteries had already been formed into a synod, which met, for the first time, at Monaghan, on the 20th October 1779.<sup>45</sup> This new judicatory was not subject to the Scottish court of the same name, but was recognised by it as possessed of co-ordinate authority, so that it could act independently in regard to the question of union. The two Irish Antiburgher presbyteries were

£13. It would seem that a petition from the county of Down, in favour of parliamentary reform, which was presented to the House of Commons about the commencement of the year 1784, was very offensive to Lord Hillsborough. About this time a number of the seceding ministers signed a counter-petition, and thus greatly recommended themselves to their patron. (Birch's "Address to the Seceding or Associate Synod of Ireland," p. 29.) A copy of this counter-petition may be found in the *Belfast News-Letter* of the 24th of February 1784, signed by Thomas Mayn, the seceding minister of Ballyronney, and Samuel Edgar, the seceding minister of Loughaghery.

<sup>44</sup> "Speech of Professor Rogers," p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> In 1777, the third Irish Burgher Presbytery, that of Derry, was constituted. It consisted, at its establishment, of four ministers, the Rev. Joseph Ker of Ballygonny, the Rev. James Harper of Knockloughran, the Rev. John Bridge of Clennanees, and the Rev. Thomas Dickson of Termont. When the Irish Burgher Synod was formed, it consisted of only twenty ministers. Rogers' "Speech," p. 14.

still constituent parts of the synod in Scotland, and, as it condemned their proceedings, they were obliged to break up the negotiation. These two presbyteries having been, in the meantime, divided into four, were soon afterwards formed into a synod, which met for the first time at Belfast, on the third Tuesday of August 1788.<sup>46</sup> But the Irish Antiburgher Synod still acknowledged the supervision of the Scottish Antiburgher General Synod, and this circumstance long continued to prevent the consummation of the union.

About this time, Dr. Woodward, bishop of Cloyne, published a pamphlet which excited uncommon attention, and which led to a keen and well-sustained controversy. As this production owed much of its interest to the time of its appearance, and as several ministers of the Presbyterian Church engaged in the discussion it provoked, it will be necessary to state the circumstances in which it originated.

The clergy of the establishment had long been extremely inefficient. Some of them were openly immoral; many were non-resident; with very few exceptions, their preaching was as contemptible in point of matter as it was anti-evangelical in spirit; and, of the able and accomplished men whom it undoubtedly possessed, some were devoted to secular studies, and others to the pursuits of fashionable society.<sup>47</sup> By means of the labours of Whitefield and his associates, a small number of eminently spiritual preachers had already been raised up within its pale;

<sup>46</sup> At the time of the formation of the Irish Antiburgher Synod, the four presbyteries were thus arranged—the presbytery of Belfast had the care of the congregations of Gilnahirk, Lisburn or Hillhall, Newtownards, Ballycopeland, and Belfast; the presbytery of Markethill—Markethill, Tyrone's Ditches, Newry, and Moira; the presbytery of Derry—Newtownlimavady, Carnone, Aghadoey, and Derry; and the presbytery of Templepatrick and Ahoghill—Templepatrick (or Lylchill), Roseyards, Ballyeaston, and Larne and Islandmagee.

<sup>47</sup> "The criminal sloth of the clergy, and their great inattention to the people, must astonish as well as shock every pious and candid mind; and to seek a parallel in any other Church in Europe, *of whatever name it may be*, would be a vain attempt." "Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon," vol. ii. p. 207.



but most of the bishops discouraged, and even persecuted, ministers of earnest piety and popular talents.<sup>48</sup> It was not strange that religion languished under the care of such guardians. The people ceased to respect either their persons or their ministrations, and sunk into a state of practical infidelity. In consequence of the mode in which tithes were then levied, they pressed with special severity upon the lower class of landholders; and the feeling cherished towards those by whom they were received added to the unpopularity of their exaction. As rents were high, and as the country was in a very impoverished condition, the farmers complained bitterly of their burdens, and they were soon furnished with an apology for repudiating, at least partially, the claims of the Episcopal clergy. At the recent election, the representation of the populous county of Cork had been vigorously contested, and the ministers of the establishment, almost to a man, had voted for the Tory candidates. The other party retaliated, by encouraging the small farmers to enter into a systematic combination for reducing the ecclesiastical revenues.<sup>49</sup> Bands of peasantry, called *Right Boys*, amounting to hundreds or to thousands, marched unarmed throughout the country, and, wherever they went, administered oaths, binding the people to pay tithes only according to a certain scale of their own appointment. The insurgents did not long content themselves with

<sup>48</sup> When the Rev. Mr. Shirley, a most devoted and useful minister, officiated in Dublin in 1780, he was attended by the Archbishop of Dublin, and the bishops of Limerick, Ossory, and Derry, with a view, as was believed, "to conjure up some accusation against him, by which they might silence his preaching." ("Life and Times of Lady Huntingdon," vol. ii. p. 185.) By an illegal stretch of power, the Bishop of Down and Connor, in 1777, deprived the Rev. Edward Smyth of Ballyculter of his cure. Mr. Smyth was then one of the very few exemplary ministers of the Established Church in the North of Ireland; but he had warned a noble lord, a member of his congregation, who was living in open adultery, of the guilt of approaching the Lord's table, and the bishop undertook the inglorious office of executioner of the vengeance of the titled delinquent. See "Account of the Trial of Edward Smyth, late curate of Ballyculter, in the county of Down." Dublin, 1777.

<sup>49</sup> Butler's "Justification," pp. 19, 20.

regulating the dues of the clergy. They soon proceeded to limit the amount of rent, to oppose the collection of hearth-money, to raise the price of labour, and to nail up the doors of churches.

Matters were in this position towards the end of the year 1786, when the publication of a work by the Right Reverend Dr. Woodward was advertised.<sup>50</sup> The anarchy prevailing in the South of Ireland had already awakened anxiety all over the country; and as soon as it was known that the subject had been taken up by a bishop of undoubted ability who resided in the county which was the principal scene of the disturbances, his pamphlet commanded an almost unprecedented sale. In twelve days it had reached a fourth edition, and, in a few months, a *ninth* was required to satisfy the curiosity of the public. It is not extraordinary that it created a sensation, for it is obviously the production of an original thinker, and it was certainly not intended to repress alarm. The new American republic now presented to the civilised world the example of a country professing Christianity where there was no established Church, and the Bishop of Cloyne seems to have been haunted by the apprehension that Ireland might take the hint, and dispense with the services of the Protestant hierarchy. He accordingly labours with the utmost ingenuity to prove that the preservation of the Church as by law established is essential to the safety of the civil constitution. "The business of this little tract is," says he, "to place the Church in a point of view merely political; to prove to the gentlemen of landed property in this kingdom that it is so essentially incorporated with the state, that the subversion of the one must necessarily overthrow the other; and that the Church of Ireland is, at the present moment, in imminent danger of subversion."<sup>51</sup> In the course of his argument, he makes some most damaging admissions as to the inefficiency of an institute

<sup>50</sup> It is entitled, "The Present State of the Church of Ireland: containing a description of its precarious situation, and the consequent danger to the public. Recommended to the serious consideration of the friends of the Protestant interest."

<sup>51</sup> Page 6. The "Little Tract" extends to 124 duodecimo pages.

which he is so desirous to uphold. He acknowledges that it had been making no inroads upon Popery, and that it possessed little influence even with its own adherents. "The lay Protestants in general do not," says he, "second their clergymen by their exertions; and too many of the higher ranks discountenance all religion by entirely neglecting public worship."<sup>52</sup> At the same time, he makes a most imprudent attack, as well on the Presbyterians as the Romanists. "Of the three persuasions," says Dr. Woodward, "the members of the Established Church alone can be cordial friends to the entire constitution of this realm, with perfect consistency of principle. And without such consistency, no body of men, for we speak not of the particular characters of individuals, *can be entitled to national confidence.*"<sup>53</sup>

Had the bishop affirmed that Episcopalians alone could consistently approve of the Church as by law established, he would have only given expression to a truism, but when he thus apparently challenged the loyalty of all who did not belong to his communion, he provoked a host of assailants. One of the first writers who noticed his performance was no less distinguished a personage than Dr. James Butler,<sup>54</sup> Roman Catholic archbishop of Cashel. In a letter addressed to Lord Kenmare, a Roman Catholic nobleman who had taken an active part in the suppression of the Right Boys, and dated December 27, 1786, the titular dignitary complained in strong terms of the injustice of Dr. Woodward's attack. Soon afterwards, in a publication, entitled, "A Justification of the Tenets of the Roman Catholic Religion," he entered at length upon a discussion of the charges which his Episcopal accuser had preferred. In this work Dr. Butler vindicates the fidelity of Papists in regard to oaths in the way usually adopted by Romish controversialists, and much of his reasoning will be far from satisfactory to the well-informed reader; but he occasionally directs his logic with great effect against the weak points in the argument of the Protestant prelate, and sometimes

<sup>52</sup> Pages 47, 48.

<sup>53</sup> Page 19.

<sup>54</sup> This ecclesiastic was the compiler of the small catechism still in use among Irish Romanists.

turns the reasoning most adroitly against Dr. Woodward himself.<sup>55</sup>

Other parties came forward to repel<sup>56</sup> or sustain<sup>57</sup> the charges of the right reverend author; but by far the most formidable of his opponents was a member of the synod of Ulster, already mentioned in these pages, the Rev. Dr. Campbell of Armagh. Early in 1787, this minister published "*A Vindication of the Principles and Character of the Presbyterians of Ireland*,"<sup>58</sup> in which, by an appeal to history, he proved most triumphantly, that instead of being unworthy of national confidence, they had ever been the best friends of the British constitution; whereas prelacy, which Dr. Woodward had represented as essential to the safety of the social fabric, had more than once brought the state to the very verge of ruin. This work, as seasonable as it was effective, was noticed by the bishop in a subsequent edition of his pamphlet; but the Rev. Dr. Joseph Stock, an ex-Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and afterwards bishop successively of Killala and of Waterford, considered it necessary to review it in a separate publication.<sup>59</sup> "Dr. Campbell," says this writer, "is

<sup>55</sup> To prove the importance attached to the ecclesiastical constitution from time immemorial, the Bishop of Cloyne states, that the barons, when laying the foundation of English liberty, provided for *the Church* in the very first article of Magna Charta. To this the titular archbishop naively replies, "That a *Romish Church*, acknowledging the supremacy of the Pope as much, at least, as it does now, should be so nearly connected with the general freedom, was perhaps more than his lordship intended to concede to me, when he owned that her preservation was the first article in Magna Charta." "*Justification*," pp. 16, 17.

<sup>56</sup> On the side of the Romanists, the celebrated Father O'Leary engaged in this controversy. On the side of the Presbyterians, the Rev. Samuel Barber of Rathfriland published a spirited pamphlet.

<sup>57</sup> The Rev. Dr. William Hales, Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and afterwards so well known by his great work on chronology, replied to Dr. Butler and Mr. O'Leary.

<sup>58</sup> In a duodecimo pamphlet of 74 pages, which passed through several editions in the course of a few months.

<sup>59</sup> It is entitled, "*A Reply to the Rev. Dr. Campbell's 'Vindication of the Principles and Character of the Presbyterians of Ireland.'*" Dublin, 1787, pp. 132. One of the points incidentally noticed in this controversy is the



an opponent that deserves to be treated with high respect. He possesses a clear and nervous style, an extensive acquaintance with history, shrewdness of argument, and a laudable zeal for the reputation of his party. His pamphlet commends itself also by a strain of moderation which, with a few exceptions, is supported throughout the whole."<sup>60</sup> The controversy now assumed the character of a war of ecclesiastical principles, and Dr. Stock, in his "Reply," endeavoured to fasten on the Presbyterians the imputation of intolerance. To these rejoinders Dr. Campbell published an elaborate answer,<sup>61</sup> entitled, "An Examination of the Bishop of Cloyne's Defence." In this work he vindicates his Church against the charge of persecution, and fully maintains his reputation as an acute and erudite polemic. His "Examination" was the last publication of importance connected with this long and able discussion.

These literary efforts of the minister of Armagh rendered good service to the cause of Irish nonconformity, by supplying the reading public with important information relative to the history and polity of Presbyterians. But neither this writer, nor the Episcopal divines with whom he was contending, appreciated those doctrines which constitute the peculiar glory of evangelical Protestantism. They all concurred in rejecting "the righteousness

comparative numbers of the Episcopalians and Presbyterians of Ireland. Dr. Campbell contends that the Presbyterians are a large majority; Drs. Woodward and Stock maintain that the Episcopalians outnumber all sects of dissenters united. See note 31 of this chapter.

<sup>60</sup> Pages 5, 6. Bishop Mant seems to have entirely misunderstood the real character of this controversy. Sir Richard Musgrave, the writer whose account of it he quotes, appears to have been no better informed. See Mant's "History," vol. ii. p. 715.

<sup>61</sup> This work, which extends to 216 duodecimo pages, was published in 1788. The full title is, "An Examination of the Bishop of Cloyne's Defence of his Principles, with observations on some of his lordship's apologists, particularly the Rev. Dr. Stock; containing an inquiry into the constitution and effects of our ecclesiastical establishment, and also an historical review of the political principles and conduct of Presbyterians and Episcopalians in Great Britain and Ireland. With a Defence of the Church of Scotland from the charge of persecution brought by his Lordship's apologist. By William Campbell, D.D., minister of Armagh."

which is of faith." Though appealing professedly to the supporters of what was called "the Protestant interest," Bishop Woodward, throughout the whole of his large pamphlet, studiously avoids a reference to any of the saving truths of the Gospel. Dr. Campbell speaks in terms of commendation of Dr. Priestly, the Socinian;<sup>62</sup> and the future Bishop of Killala and Waterford seems to have been entirely ignorant of theological science.<sup>63</sup>

Whilst the controversies created by the pamphlet of the Bishop of Cloyne occupied much public attention, two of the smaller sects in Ulster were deeply interested in a theological discussion of a different character. Though the Seceders admitted the continued obligation of the national covenants, they felt themselves perfectly at liberty to acknowledge the existing civil government; but the Reformed Presbytery, which had recently been extending its influence in the northern province,<sup>64</sup> refused to sanction the authority of any but a covenanting king.<sup>65</sup> This question had long

<sup>62</sup> "Examination of the Bishop of Cloyne's Defence of his Principles," p. 215. It is well known that Dr. Campbell was a Unitarian, but, like other members of the synod of Ulster of kindred sentiments, he did not make any very open avowal of his creed. Though a vigorous writer, he was by no means a popular preacher.

<sup>63</sup> When Bishop of Killala, he wrote "A Narrative" of the occurrences in his neighbourhood during the French invasion in the summer of 1798. In this exceedingly interesting historical sketch, he thus addresses the widow of a deceased clergyman:—"Thou hast it in thy power to earn a splendid recompense hereafter by patience, by attention to thy fatherless offspring." "Narrative," p. 102.

<sup>64</sup> In 1770, the Rev. Thomas Hamilton was ordained at Glendermot, near Derry, by the Reformed Presbytery, and, in 1772, the Rev. William Stavely was ordained at Conlig, near Newtownards. In 1783, the Rev. James M'Kinney was ordained at Dervock, and the Rev. Samuel Alexander at Bready. Mr. M'Kinney afterwards emigrated to America, and greatly promoted the advancement of the Covenanting Church in that country. In 1788, the Rev. William Gibson was ordained at Kellswater, and the Rev. William Gamble at Ballyvey, county Donegal.

<sup>65</sup> The following statements are an authorised exposition of the principles of the Covenanting Church:—"Such as are in ecclesiastical fellowship with us, cannot, without a breach of their testimony, hold fellowship with the civil government, by composing a part of the legislature, or by taking those

afforded a fruitful topic for debate, and the aid of the press had been frequently employed in its illustration. But, about this time, the adherents of the two parties assembled in the vicinity of Ballibay to hear a *viva voce* discussion of its merits. On the side of the associate body appeared the Rev. John Rogers,<sup>66</sup> one of the most learned and respectable of the secession ministers; the champion of the Reformed Presbytery was Mr. James M'Garraigh,<sup>67</sup> one of their licentiates. On a platform erected in the open air, not far from the present meeting-house of Cahans, and in the presence of an immense crowd of auditors, these two disputants appeared to discuss this singular point of polemic divinity.

oaths, for the maintenance and defence of the complex constitution, which are required of members of parliament and others filling public offices both in Church and State. . . . Neither can they compose a part of the executive government by holding offices under the crown, civil or military. . . . Yet we do not feel debarred from doing what may be in our power, as private individuals, for strengthening those wholesome laws which are necessary for the security of life and property, or for promoting the administration of justice, when permitted to do so without being identified with a corrupt constitution." "Historical Part of the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland." Glasgow, 1839, p. 222.

<sup>66</sup> Mr. Rogers, who was ordained on the 3d of June 1767, immediately succeeded Dr. Clark as minister of Ballibay, now Cahans. In 1781, he published "An Historical Dialogue," in which he discusses, in a very agreeable style, several theological subjects then much agitated, and among the rest the doctrine of the Reformed Presbytery regarding the civil magistrate. In 1782, he attended the great volunteer meeting at Dungannon, and was one of the two delegates who dissented from the resolutions approving of the relaxation of the penal laws affecting the Roman Catholics. A speech which he delivered at a meeting of synod in Cookstown, in 1808, and which was subsequently published, supplies much interesting information relative to the Irish Secession Church. He also published several sermons. In 1796, he was appointed Professor of Divinity for the Irish Burgher Synod. He entered on his duties in the following year, and till his death, in August 1814, delivered lectures to the students of that body in the meeting-house of Cahans. His son, the venerable minister of Glascar, is now one of the patriarchs of the Irish General Assembly.

<sup>67</sup> Mr. M'Garraigh, who was ordained by the Reformed Presbytery at Bready, near Derry, in July 1789, emigrated shortly afterwards to America, where he was suspended from the ministry "on account of irregular conduct." "Sketches of Ecclesiastical History," Belfast, 1813, p. 116.

Immediately in front of Mr. Rogers stood a goodly pile of books, to which he occasionally appealed in confirmation of his statements; but Mr. McGarragh apparently scorned the aid of such auxiliaries, and exhibited no volume but one, which, however, he displayed somewhat ostentatiously—an English Bible. The advocate of the Reformed Presbytery was deficient neither in self-possession nor in volubility of speech; and as the Seceders had recently accepted *Regium Donum*, he did not, of course, neglect a topic which afforded such scope for his powers of declamation; but, as might have been anticipated, the discussion produced no practical result, as the two parties now adhered more firmly than ever to the principles which they had previously professed.

The annual meeting of the synod of Ulster, which assembled at Lurgan<sup>68</sup> in 1789, and of which the Rev. Joseph Douglas<sup>69</sup> was chosen moderator, was more numerous<sup>70</sup> than any that had been held since the period of the subscription controversy. Mr. James Lang, the synod's agent for the *Regium Donum*, had died the year preceding, and, at a special meeting convened shortly after his decease, the Rev. Robert Black,<sup>71</sup> one

<sup>68</sup> At this time the minister of Lurgan was the Rev. William Magee. He was ordained there in 1780, and died in the charge in 1800. In the minutes of 1788, there is a resolution recommending that "the several volumes of the records of the General Synod . . . be transmitted to the Rev. Mr. Magee of Lurgan, who has engaged to take particular care of them." As the synod about this period met generally in Lurgan, the records were committed to the custody of Mr. Magee as a matter of convenience. The widow of this minister inherited a large fortune from her two brothers, one of whom was a colonel in the Indian army, and at her death, in 1846, left above £60,000 in various legacies to the Irish Presbyterian Church. According to her will, the sum of £20,000 was to be devoted "to the building and endowment" of a Presbyterian college, and about £30,000 to the Foreign Mission of the Irish General Assembly.

<sup>69</sup> Mr. Douglas was ordained minister of Clough, near Ballymena, in 1760. He was one of the officers of the volunteers, and seems to have valued himself on his fine military appearance, as he frequently preached in his regimentals. His daughter Margaret was married to Richard Bateson, Esq., of Londonderry, and the present Sir Robert Bateson, Bart., of Castruse, county of Donegal, is his grandson. Mr. Douglas died in 1805.

<sup>70</sup> There were present at this meeting 116 ministers and 37 elders.

<sup>71</sup> Dr. Colville of Dromore died in April 1777, and the congregation then re-



of the ministers of Londonderry, had been chosen to the vacant office; but as objections had been made to the regularity of the proceeding, the election was now formally confirmed. Mr. Black, who was a man of superior talent, and who already occupied the position of a leader among the Presbyterian ministers of Ulster, had also recommended himself, as well by his good sense as his polished manners, to many persons of rank and influence. He was in various respects exceedingly well qualified for the situation to which he was now chosen, and, on more than one occasion, he contributed greatly, by his ability and zeal, to promote the interests of the synod. Shortly after the general election of 1790,<sup>72</sup> it was understood that several influential members of the Irish parliament were disposed to support a motion for an increase of the Royal Bounty, and as Mr. Black was soon apprised of their favourable inclinations, he did not fail to employ all the energy and address which he possessed in forwarding the design. The idea originated with the Earl of Charlemont, a nobleman who generally opposed the existing administration, but who throughout life maintained the character of a sincere and enlightened patriot. Convinced that the services of Irish Presbyterians to the state had never been properly acknowledged, and aware how the hopes of their ministers had been blighted a few years before, he had ever since been looking for an oppor-

turned to the synod of Ulster. Mr. Black was ordained to the pastoral charge, in June 1777, by the presbytery of Armagh. At the second great Dungan-non convention in 1783, he electrified the auditory by a speech of stirring eloquence, and immediately afterwards received a call from the congregation of Londonderry, where he was installed in January 1784.

<sup>72</sup> On this occasion, the contest for the representation of the county of Down was of almost unprecedented length. At the final close of the poll, on the *sixty-ninth* day, the members stood thus—

Earl of Hillsborough,	3529
Honourable Robert Stewart (afterwards the celebrated Lord Castlereagh,	3114
Honourable Edward Ward,	2980
George Matthews, Esq.,	2219

The contest cost Mr. Stewart's father, Lord Londonderry, £60,000! "Memoirs and Correspondence of Lord Viscount Castlereagh," vol. i. p. 7.

tunity when their case might be favourably considered. It occurred to him that their claims might now be urged with a prospect of success. Mr. Grattan<sup>73</sup> and others, connected with what was called the independent party in the Irish parliament, cordially entered into his views. At length, on the 11th of February 1792, Colonel Stewart of Killymoon moved in the House of Commons "that an humble address be presented to his majesty, beseeching him to take into his consideration the situation of the Presbyterian ministers of the province of Ulster, and to make such farther provision for them as in his wisdom and bounty he shall think fit, and that this house shall make good the same."<sup>74</sup> This motion, for which the sanction of government had been previously obtained,<sup>75</sup> was seconded by the Right Honourable George Ponsonby, and, after a slight modification,<sup>76</sup> passed unanimously. It subsequently appeared that the wishes of the commons had been anticipated; for by a king's letter, dated January 21, 1792, an additional sum of "£5000 per annum was granted, during pleasure, for the use of the Presbyterian ministers of Ireland."<sup>77</sup>

From the mode in which this grant was distributed, it was evident that the Seceders were still much indebted to the services of the powerful friend by whom they had formerly been patronised, and who had lately been advanced to the dignity of Marquis of Downshire. The new bounty was divided among the parties interested, not according to the amount of the population connected with the respective denominations, but according to the number of the ministers. Thus the synod of Ulster obtained

<sup>73</sup> Mr. Grattan more than once expressed his admiration of the Presbyterian polity. In a speech in the Irish parliament, he declared that the "Presbyterian religion is the father of the free constitution of England."

<sup>74</sup> "Plowden," vol. ii. part i. pp. 360, 361.

<sup>75</sup> On this occasion the Marquis of Waterford rendered important service. The Earl of Westmoreland was now lord-lieutenant.

<sup>76</sup> Mr. Charles O'Neill moved that the words "province of Ulster" be expunged, and the words "this kingdom" inserted, for the purpose of including the ministers of Dublin and the South. Mr. Bagwell seconded this amendment, which was unanimously adopted.

<sup>77</sup> "Substance of Two Speeches," by Dr. Black, p. 73.

a much smaller share than that to which it would have been otherwise entitled.<sup>78</sup>

The history of the Irish Presbyterian Church, during the days of the volunteers, has now been briefly related, and the reader may have observed how the political movements of the period contributed to its outward advancement. The aid furnished by the state towards the support of its ministers was, meanwhile, more than tripled, and the privileges of its members were secured and enlarged by various legal enactments. But its records for these fifteen years present few and very dubious indications of its internal prosperity. It may, indeed, safely be asserted, that during the interval between 1778 and 1793, error was avowed by its advocates in Presbyterian Ulster with a degree of boldness which they had never hitherto ventured to assume. The greater number of the more prominent members of the General Synod did not conceal their aversion to evangelical principles.<sup>79</sup> In 1782, the presbytery of Killileagh published a series of resolutions in the *Belfast News-Letter*, in which the doctrine of "imputed sin" is characterised as "blasphemous;" and yet, instead of carrying out the discipline of the Church against ministers who had thus unscrupulously assailed the theology of its own confession, the synod contented itself with a tame and equivocal expression of disapprobation.<sup>80</sup> At the annual meeting of 1781, it was publicly announced, that

<sup>78</sup> At this time, probably the five-sixths of the Presbyterian population were connected with the synod of Ulster. The grant was divided thus—Synod of Ulster and presbytery of Antrim, £3729, 16s. 10d.; Seceders, £927, 8s. 5d.; Southern Association and minister of the French church, St. Peter's, Dublin, £342, 14s. 9d. The number of seceding ministers now amounted to forty-six (twenty-eight Burghers and eighteen Antiburghers), the members of the synod of Ulster and presbytery of Antrim to 185, and there were sixteen ministers belonging to the Southern Association. The actual amount now added to the bounty of each minister was £20, 3s. 2d.

<sup>79</sup> There is no evidence whatever that the majority of the synod of Ulster at any time denied the Deity of Christ. The greater number of the anti-evangelical party were simply Pelagians or semi-Pelagians—either totally denying the doctrine of the fall, or only partially admitting it.

<sup>80</sup> The resolutions of the Killileagh presbytery were of a political character, and referred particularly to the removal of Roman Catholic disabilities. The presbytery declare that "they have considered it as iniquitous to con-

in the presbytery of Armagh subscription was not required from candidates for license; but when a motion was made that the law relative to the signature of the Westminster formulary should be either enforced or set aside, the synod resolved, by a great majority, to defer the discussion. The proceedings of succeeding synods, in reference to the same subject, present some rare specimens of ecclesiastical fencing. When the matter was introduced at the annual meeting of 1782, it was suggested that, without a resolution to the contrary, existing arrangements must continue; and as no member felt disposed to entangle himself in a troublesome discussion by proposing the repeal of a law which the majority of presbyteries already systematically violated, the following extraordinary minute was finally adopted:—"The affair of subscription deferred to this session being resumed, this motion was made—If no one move for a repeal of the rule respecting subscription, then the rule shall remain in its full force; and, as no one moved for its repeal, the rule continued." On reflection, some of the New-Light party seem to have considered that they had rather incautiously sanctioned a resolution which apparently required the stringent observance of the law of subscription, and, at the annual meeting of 1783, they contrived to persuade the synod to agree *unanimously* to a resolution that the words "full force," in the entry of the preceding year, should

continue penalties against obedient children for the disobedience of their ancestors, and viewed it with detestation as *a black branch grafted upon the blasphemous doctrine of imputed sin.*" The synod pronounced this statement "highly imprudent and offensive," and instructed the moderator to express "its disapprobation of said paragraph, and in the most earnest manner caution all its members against all such improper publications in future;" taking care to add, that it had "not the most distant idea of condemning the generous principles of civil and religious liberty expressed in said publication." (Minutes of Synod for 1782.) The presbytery of Killileagh was probably the most heterodox connected with the General Synod. In 1786, it reported to the annual meeting that it had received under its care Mr. Arthur M'Mahon, "*with ample credentials from the presbytery of Antrim.*" The synod took no notice of this report, but permitted it to be inserted in its minutes. This presbytery was dissolved in 1796, and its members distributed among the presbyteries of Dromore, Bangor, and Armagh.



be “erased,” and the words “as usual” inserted in their place.<sup>81</sup> As the law was now usually neglected, the orthodox party soon saw reason to regret that they had acquiesced in this modification of the minute, and, at the meeting of 1784, the subject was again brought under discussion; but, after some debating, both parties consented to the following meagre and unsatisfactory deliverance:—“It was moved and agreed to, that the word ‘usual’ was vague and improper, and that the word ‘full’ in the former minute was unnecessary; that neither of these terms be used, and that the words of the minute stand—That the rule respecting subscription is *unrepealed*.” The orthodox party were obliged to be satisfied with a decision which did not directly compromise one of the fundamental principles of the Church; and the heterodox majority did not think it necessary to endanger the dismemberment of the body by insisting upon the abrogation of a law they were at perfect liberty to disregard. For upwards of forty years afterwards, the synod continued in this uncomfortable and anomalous condition.

It is an instructive fact, that error was most prevalent in the synod of Ulster when the course of education prescribed for students of theology was most limited. As the law now stood, any candidate who had attended a divinity class only one session of five months’ length might be licensed as a preacher. Pastors thus educated were most miserably furnished for the duties of their profession. The “mystery of the faith” cannot be understood without patient investigation, neither can the book of eternal wisdom be interpreted by every mere tyro in the most profound of the sciences. The scanty stock of theological learning now generally possessed by those who occupied Irish Presbyterian pulpits appeared in the poverty, as well as in the sameness, of their ministrations. Some of them, after having passed through the philosophical classes at the University of Glasgow, studied divinity at home under the direction of the presbytery; and in making themselves acquainted with the unsound or unprofitable

<sup>81</sup> The New-Light party, no doubt, argued on this occasion, that the rule respecting subscription was modified by the Pacific Act of 1720.

text-books prescribed for examination by their fathers in the Church, their time was misemployed and their minds perverted.<sup>82</sup> Not a few felt themselves scarcely competent for the preparation of sermons, and one minister of better capacity not unfrequently supplied discourses to a number of the brethren in his neighbourhood.<sup>83</sup>

About this time some attempts were made, by means of a higher order of academies, to elevate the standard of literary attainment among the Presbyterian ministers of Ulster. The subject was brought under the notice of the General Synod in 1784, and, at the annual meeting of the following year, the Rev. Dr. William Crawford of Strabane<sup>84</sup> was encouraged to undertake the tuition of students in logic, mathematics, and moral philosophy. In 1786, the Belfast Academy was opened, and, in the hope that it would soon attain distinction as a collegiate seminary, the presbytery of Killileagh subscribed one hundred guineas towards its support;<sup>85</sup> but though, at an early period, philosophical lectures were occasionally delivered within its walls, it does not appear that it was ever attended by any considerable number of professional students. In Strabane, a regular course of collegiate instruction was provided, and several ministers of the synod of Ulster were educated at Dr. Crawford's academy.

<sup>82</sup> Strange as it may now appear, not a few of the ministers of the synod of Ulster, about the beginning of the present century, had never attended a divinity class. The late Rev. W. D. H. M'Ewen of Belfast stated, before the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry in 1825, that such was his own case. (See "Fourth Report," p. 93.) Meanwhile all students were required to attend the literary and philosophical classes of the university.

<sup>83</sup> The Rev. John Cameron of Dunluce "declared to his intimate friends that his discourses were, every Sabbath-day, preached to *six* congregations." (Preface to "The Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures," &c., p. 9.) The Rev. Andrew Alexander, who was minister of Urney from 1749 to 1808, is known to have assisted his brethren in the same way.

<sup>84</sup> The Rev. William Crawford was ordained minister of Strabane in 1766. He was a man of considerable learning and great application, but his religious views were decidedly anti-evangelical. He removed to the 1st congregation of Holywood in 1798, and died there in 1801. For a farther account of this minister, see vol. i., chap. iv., note 7.

<sup>85</sup> "Historical Collections relative to the Town of Belfast," p. 325.

But as the means of tuition which such an institution could furnish were necessarily very limited, and as it did not afford anything like adequate remuneration to those by whom it was conducted, its classes were discontinued in a few years, and all the students resorted once more to the Scottish universities.

So long as pure doctrine was preached by the ministers of the synod of Ulster, its congregations continued to multiply, but now the business of Church extension was nearly at a stand. For the twenty years preceding 1789,<sup>86</sup> not one new congregation was regularly erected.<sup>87</sup> In 1770, a resolution was adopted requiring that, before the inhabitants of any district where no meeting-house had previously existed could be formed into a distinct worshipping society, they must give to the presbytery satisfactory security for the payment of £50 per annum to their future pastor. But though such security was repeatedly offered during this interval, the General Synod pertinaciously refused to add to the number of its ministers. Meanwhile the Seceders were gradually increasing their congregations. In the spring of 1746, they had not a single minister settled in Ireland; but, from the date of the ordination of Mr. Patton in that year, they had been constantly advancing, and in 1792, or forty-six

<sup>86</sup> In 1789, "a supplication, signed David Park, in the name of the greater number of the Presbyterian inhabitants of Stewartstown," and praying for the erection of a congregation in that place, was presented to the synod, and a motion in its favour was carried after a hard struggle. An application of the same kind from the same town had been rejected the year preceding by the casting vote of the moderator. MS. Minutes of Synod.

<sup>87</sup> Two or three congregations were meanwhile added, though somewhat irregularly, to the General Synod. Tradition states, that Millisle, near Donaghadee, was originally erected by the Seceders, but, about 1773, it joined the synod of Ulster. In 1777, the people of Kirkcubbin memorialled to be erected into a congregation; but though they promised to pay £50 per annum towards the support of a minister, the synod refused to accede to their application. They then gave a call to Mr. George Brydone, a licentiate of the Established Church of Scotland, who obtained ordination in 1778 from the presbytery of Lauder. The synod greatly resented this interference with its jurisdiction, and complained of the irregular conduct of the presbytery to the Scottish General Assembly. At length, in 1783, Mr. Brydone and his congregation were taken under the care of the synod.

years afterwards, they had forty-six ministers. The Covenanters, also, were now making considerable progress. Towards the end of the year 1792, the first Reformed Presbytery was constituted in Ireland. Of this denomination the Rev. William Stavelly was the great Irish apostle. Mr. Stavelly, who possessed highly popular talents, ministered among the Covenanters for fifty-two years, and was the means of establishing ten or twelve congregations.

The secular spirit evinced about this period by the members of the General Synod betokened the decline of practical piety. In the days of the volunteers, "the rusty black was often exchanged for the glowing scarlet;" and Presbyterian ministers, arrayed in military costume, were to be seen mingling in the sham fight, or superintending the evolutions of companies or battalions. Even the grave Covenanters did not escape the infection of this military mania, as one of the newspapers of the day<sup>88</sup> reports that the Rev. William Stavelly, captain of the Drumbracken company, appeared at Drumbo, on the 26th of December 1792, and acted as "reviewing general" of the volunteers. Circumstances may arise when it may be the duty even of the heralds of the Gospel of peace to gird on the sword for their protection, but no such emergency had yet occurred, so that the military ardour now displayed by Presbyterian ministers only proved that they were not sufficiently devoted to the business of their profession. The zeal with which they engaged in the political struggles of the period also betrayed a sad want of spirituality of disposition. In the great contest for the representation of the county of Down in 1790, one of them thus describes the part which he acted—"For several weeks previous to the election, and for the three months during which it continued, I was on horseback almost every day; and seldom left in my own house at night. In fact, I rode one horse nearly to death, reduced another to half his value, and expended above £50, part of which

<sup>88</sup> *Northern Star*. On one occasion, a minister appeared in military dress at a meeting of the General Synod. The court noticed this indecency, and he was obliged to retire and reappear in his proper habiliments. Dickson's "Retractions," p. 62.



I was obliged to borrow.”<sup>89</sup> Few, indeed, of the members of the General Synod were so far forgetful of their sacred character as the writer of this narrative, but still too many compromised their religious consistency by merging the pastor in the politician.

The Irish Presbyterians had been long noted for their strict observance of the Sabbath, but the New-Light theology introduced lax views of the obligation of the fourth commandment. When the public mind was wrought up into a state of excitement by the struggles of rival aspirants to parliamentary honours, the sanctity of the Lord’s-day was often shamefully violated. Prior to the general election of 1776, Mr. Wilson, the popular candidate for the county of Antrim, appeared, on more than one occasion, in a meeting-house on the Sabbath, and after sermon proceeded, in a lengthened speech, to press his claims upon the freeholders. In 1783, the results of political meetings, held in places of Presbyterian worship on the Lord’s-day, were regularly published in the newspapers by the parties themselves.<sup>90</sup> The year 1790, the era of another general election, witnessed the renewal of those scenes of Sabbath desecration. The volunteers often engaged in their martial exercises on the day of sacred rest; and when the northern nonconformists began to fraternise with the adherents of the Pope, a company of the more liberal of the Presbyterians were sometimes seen marching to a Romish chapel on a Sabbath, in testimony of their good will to their Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> “Narrative of William Steel Dickson, D.D.,” pp. 20, 21.

<sup>90</sup> It appears from the *Belfast News-Letter*, that on Sunday, the 3d of August 1783, resolutions were passed in Connor Presbyterian meeting-house in favour of Rowley and O’Neill, the minister of the congregation being in the chair. On the last Sabbath of July of the same year, the Right Honourable Colonel O’Neill addressed the congregation of Donegore in the meeting-house, on the subject of rotten boroughs, and a more equal representation of the people. Several other cases of the same kind might be adduced. These proceedings were, of course, condemned by the evangelical ministers; but such was the state of the Church, that the offenders could not be brought under discipline.

<sup>91</sup> On Sunday, the 30th May 1784, the Belfast first volunteer company

The profanation of the holy rest, by all ranks of the community, is one among the many evidences which this period presents of the prevalence of irreligion. Even the representative of majesty in the castle of Dublin held his levees on the Lord's-day, and thus exhibited an example of Sabbath dissipation which those who moved in the higher walks of life were but too ready to imitate. Wherever the theology of the Westminster Confession was faithfully propagated, the day was held in greater reverence, and the question as to the continued obligation of the fourth commandment supplied one of the tests by which the Old-Light and the New-Light ministers were discriminated;<sup>92</sup> but even those who professed the greatest strictness in regard to the law of the Sabbath did not exhibit sufficient prudence and firmness in protesting against its violation. Nothing more fearfully displayed the degeneracy of the age than the recklessness with which the most solemn occasions were converted into scenes of frivolity and indulgence. About this time the Seceders were in the habit of collecting immense audiences at sacramental seasons.<sup>93</sup> Several

paraded in full dress, and marched to mass. Great numbers of the other Protestant inhabitants also attended, and contributed to a collection for defraying the expense of the new mass-house. ("Historical Collections," p. 296.) In 1792, Captain William Duffin of Newgrove, near Ballymena, accompanied by the Broughshane volunteers, attended mass at Glenravel. *Northern Star*, April 28, 1792.

<sup>92</sup> In 1781, the Rev. James Crombie, minister of the 1st congregation, Belfast, published a sermon, in which he endeavoured to prove "the propriety of setting apart a portion of the Sabbath for the purpose of acquiring the knowledge and use of arms." In this discourse, Mr. Crombie maintained that, "by virtue of the original appointment," we are under no more obligation to keep holy the Sabbath than we are to observe the passover. The Rev. Sinclair Kelburn, the minister of the Old-Light congregation connected with the synod of Ulster in Belfast, published an answer to this discourse, in which he vindicated the continued obligation of the fourth commandment. In 1781, the Burgher Synod drew up a testimony against Sabbath-breaking, in which they particularly mention "carnal converse about worldly affairs," and "parading with the use of martial music," as instances of Sabbath profanation.

<sup>93</sup> These great sacramental assemblages originated in Scotland under entirely different circumstances, but their continuance, in a settled state of the Church, led almost unavoidably to the grossest irregularities.

ministers, having vacated their own pulpits, repaired to the place where the ordinance of the supper was about to be dispensed; one addressed the people in the meeting-house, whilst another outside preached to the multitudes assembled in the open air; but though these exercises, no doubt, often produced deep and salutary impressions, their accompaniments were anything but calculated to promote the credit of religion. At no great distance from the spot where the worshippers were congregated, refreshments were exposed for sale, tents were erected where intoxicating drinks were freely vended, the idle and the thoughtless flocked to what was profanely called "the fair," and the crowds, as they returned from the sacramental scene, sometimes displayed a strange medley of piety, levity, and intemperance. Ministers and elders might plead that the improprieties of the day had not the sanction of their approbation, but they were certainly blameworthy for continuing a system which supplied so many with an apology for the violation of the Sabbath.

During this dark night in the history of Irish Presbyterianism, several influential families quietly passed over into the Episcopal establishment.<sup>94</sup> The New-Light theology had generated the spirit of the world, and to the wealthy and ambitious it soon appeared desirable to belong to a more fashionable communion. But it would be a mistake to suppose that these Episcopal converts were placed in circumstances more favourable to spiritual improvement by the change in their ecclesiastical relations. The members of the synod of Ulster, as a body, were miserably lukewarm, but the clergy of the establishment were "twice dead." Even the most careless of the Presbyterian ministers were still obliged to maintain some appearance of professional decency; but the "cursing curate" had scarcely the good taste to refrain

<sup>94</sup> The Honourable Robert Stewart, afterwards the great Lord Castlereagh, was now educated an Episcopalian, though baptised by a Presbyterian minister. Several other persons of rank, in Dublin and the South, joined the establishment about the same period. Dr. Campbell, writing in 1788, and speaking of the Episcopal Church, says, "We see some of her highest dignities now enjoyed by men who have gone out from among us." "Examination," p. 67.

from uttering his oaths and imprecations within the very precincts of the house of God.<sup>95</sup> Many of the Presbyterian ministers were preachers of "another Gospel," but almost all the Episcopal clergy were at once ignorant of the truth themselves, and intensely hostile to its enlightened expositors. The idea of evangelising the Roman Catholic population was far above their thoughts; and one of the bishops, who seems to have been in special want of occupation, was devoting himself to the teaching of Popery in its most attractive form. "Unable," says the Bishop of Clonfert,<sup>96</sup> "to make the peasants about me good Protestants, I wish to make them good Catholics, good citizens, good anything. . . . To attempt their conversion, or to think of making them read Protestant books, would be in vain. I have, therefore, circulated among them some of the best of their own authors, particularly one Gotther."<sup>97</sup> Presbyterians had abun-

<sup>95</sup> The Rev. Edward Smyth, in his "Account of his 'Trial,'" states the following startling facts:—"There have been two petitions presented at different times to the B—— [Bishop of Down and Connor], accusing a minister of frequent drunkenness, even during service, cursing and damning his parishioners, beating his wife, absenting himself from his church even for many Sabbath-days together, and total neglect of every occasional duty; yet he was suffered to go unpunished, *unreproved*, and he still continues in his cure, though nine men attended the visitation to prove all their allegations upon oath. But *these are only common crimes*," (p. 132.) For an account of Mr. Smyth, see note 48 of this chapter.

<sup>96</sup> The Bishop of Clonfert, who published these sentiments, was the Right Rev. John Law, D.D. In 1787, he was translated to Killala, and in 1795 to Elphin, where he died in 1810. He was the son of Dr. Edmund Law, bishop of Carlisle, who throughout life appears to have had a strong leaning to Socinianism, and who died a Unitarian. See Nichol's "Literary Anecdotes," vol. ii. p. 70, and Rees' "Cyclopædia," art. Law, Edmund, D.D.

<sup>97</sup> Letter from the Bishop of Clonfert to the Rev. Mr. Moore of Boughton Blean, near Canterbury, written in 1786. Gotther's "Papist Misrepresented and Represented," was published in 1685, the year in which James II. ascended the throne, and was intended to prepare the way for the restoration of Popery in England. "As the book," says Dr. Cunningham of Edinburgh, "is written with great skill and cunning, though with an utter want of truth and honesty, it has been always a great favourite with Papists, and it is certainly well fitted to serve their purposes. Introduction to Stillfleet's "Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome," p. 27.



dant reason to mourn over the defections of their Church, but they could scarcely plead that they were obeying the imperious dictates of conscience when they passed into an establishment under the care of such overseers.

## CHAPTER XXX.

A.D. 1793-1818.

*State of public feeling in Ireland—Appointment of Earl Fitzwilliam as Lord-Lieutenant—Proposed establishment of a Presbyterian College at Cookstown—Sudden recal of Earl Fitzwilliam, and failure of the scheme—Public discontent, and low state of public morals—Real authors of the Rebellion of 1798—Loyalty of the Synod of Ulster—Speech of the Rev. Robert Black of Derry—Notices of Dr. Bruce of Belfast, and of Dr. M'Dowel of Dublin—Extent to which Presbyterians were involved in the Rebellion—Proceedings of the Synod of Ulster consequent upon it—Notice of Dr. William Steel Dickson—Proposal of a union between Great Britain and Ireland—Inducements held out at this time to the Presbyterians—Proposed augmentation of the Regium Donum, and scheme of classification—Opposition to classification—Motives of Government, and of Lord Castlereagh—Terms on which the Bounty was at length given—Beneficial effects of the augmentation of the Bounty—Symptoms of religious improvement—Establishment of the Evangelical Society of Ulster—Secessions of Associate Ministers—Notice of the Rev. Alexander Carson of Tobermore—Increase of the Secession Church, and augmentation of its Regium Donum—Opposition to classification in Burgher and Anti-burgher Synods—Secession of the Rev. James Bryce—Progress of the Covenanters—Gradual revival of religion in the Synod of Ulster—Case of the Minister of Ballee, and protest against Unitarianism—Speech of the Rev. Dr. Waugh of London before the Synod of Ulster—Establishment of the Belfast Academical Institution—The Rev. Samuel Edgar, Professor of Divinity for the Burgher Synod, lectures in it—The Synod of Ulster recognises its certificates, and proposes to appoint a Professor of Divinity—Opposition of Dr. Black—Message from Lord Castlereagh—Remarkable speech of Rev. James Carlile—The Rev. S. Hanna appointed Professor of Divinity—Death of Dr. Black.*

THOUGH the volunteers constituted so large a military force, and continued their meetings for so many years, they were uniformly distinguished by their zeal for the maintenance of social order, and they do not appear to have been ever chargeable with any

act of insubordination or outrage. When, at a critical conjuncture, they so alarmed the British ministry as to extort concessions which might not have otherwise been granted, their loyalty could not be impeached; for, whilst demanding the redress of great and palpable grievances, they proclaimed their unshaken attachment to the constitution; and at that very period they were giving the most unequivocal proofs of their fidelity to the house of Hanover. But for some time past they had no longer excited the interest which they originally awakened; and when at length they ceased to assemble on parade, there were not a few who rejoiced at the dissolution of their companies, as at the extinction of the sparks of an incipient political conflagration. The announcement of the French Revolution had created an uncommon sensation throughout the British isles, and some of the volunteers had celebrated the triumphs of Gallic republicanism in a way which gave much uneasiness to the existing administration. These inconsiderate displays were soon followed by the breaking up of their armed associations.

The public mind in Ireland was now in a most unsatisfactory condition. In 1793, Roman Catholics were admitted to the enjoyment of the elective franchise, but they continued to complain that they were still excluded from other privileges to which they were entitled. The call for parliamentary reform, which had commenced in 1783, had ever since been strenuously resisted; and though the people felt that they had a very small share of influence in the choice of the members of the House of Commons, they had little prospect of obtaining a better system of representation. The unanimity which characterised the proceedings of the popular leaders, ten years before, now prevailed no longer—religious feuds had been resuscitated—plans of parliamentary reform were promulgated, which many sober patriots utterly condemned; and, whilst the success of the French democrats emboldened some to meditate the subversion of existing institutions, the bloody scenes of the Revolution prompted others to discountenance all the schemes of political agitators. The country everywhere presented indications of divisions and discontent. Matters were in this state when Earl Fitzwilliam was appointed

lord-lieutenant of Ireland. The nomination of the new viceroy was the theme of general gratulation; and it was understood that he was empowered to give his sanction to those political measures for which the more popular of the parliamentary leaders had so long been contending. But he had only fairly entered on the duties of government when he was suddenly recalled.<sup>1</sup>

Among the projects in agitation during the viceroyalty of Earl Fitzwilliam, was a scheme for the establishment of a Presbyterian college in the province of Ulster. The ministry had signified their disposition to assist in the erection and endowment of a seminary at Maynooth, where candidates for the Roman Catholic priesthood might be educated; and Mr. Stewart of Killymoon<sup>2</sup> had put forward a claim for similar aid on behalf of the Presbyterians. In consequence of a letter addressed by him to the Rev. Dr. Crawford of Strabane, stating that "he had a prospect of obtaining from parliament a grant of money to establish a university for the education of Protestant dissenters,"<sup>3</sup> the fixed committee of the synod of Ulster was convened at Dungannon on the 27th of February 1795. At this meeting the Rev. James Cochrane<sup>4</sup> the moderator, the Rev. Dr. Crawford, and the Rev. Robert Black, were appointed to proceed immediately to Dublin, and "use their best endeavours" to procure the erection of a collegiate seminary, "under the patronage and direction of the mi-

<sup>1</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam arrived in Ireland on the 4th of January 1795, and left it on the 25th of March of the same year.

<sup>2</sup> This gentleman, who so frequently distinguished himself as the friend of the synod of Ulster, was of Presbyterian descent, and his father was an elder of the congregation of Cookstown. He had a hereditary attachment to the Presbyterian Church; and as not only most of his tenantry, but the greater portion of his constituents were Presbyterians, he took a deep interest in Presbyterian affairs. He probably encouraged the synod to propose Cookstown as the site of the college, inasmuch as, being on his own estate, he could thus, in various ways, have assisted in promoting the prosperity of the institution.

<sup>3</sup> MS. Minutes of Synod of Ulster. In 1789, the synod agreed to *print* their minutes, but the resolution was subsequently rescinded. The printed minutes of the synod of Ulster extend only from 1804 downwards. They were originally printed in folio. The octavo minutes commence in 1820.

<sup>4</sup> Minister of Ballywalter. He was ordained in 1762, and died in 1802.



nisters of the General Synod of Ulster, the presbytery of Antrim, and the Southern Association." These commissioners were instructed to propose Cookstown as the site of the contemplated establishment; and should that place be considered ineligible, they were authorised to fix upon any other locality which would "best serve the purposes of the institution."<sup>5</sup>

There is reason to believe that the synod of Ulster at this period received from the chief governor very decided encouragement to prosecute this application. An annual endowment of two thousand pounds was expected from the state; and it was proposed that, in the intended seminary, "divinity, philosophy, rhetoric, mathematics, and the languages, should be taught by a competent number of professors." But the project eventually miscarried. Before the day of meeting of the synod's committee, the British ministry had determined on the recal of Earl Fitzwilliam; and when commissioners were afterwards appointed to urge the establishment of a Presbyterian college, they tried in vain to press the subject upon the consideration of the succeeding administration. It is well known that the government now ignored almost all the designs of the late lord-lieutenant; and when told of his friendly intentions towards the synod of Ulster, Mr. Secretary Pelham replied, that "he did not find either in the office [of the chief secretary], or in any proceeding in parliament, any trace" of this plan of Presbyterian collegiate education.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Stewart of Killymoon alleged that, after the recal of Earl Fitzwilliam, he had been encouraged by Mr. Pelham himself to renew the application; but when the secretary was reminded how he had expressed himself as "*well disposed* to receive and *attend* to the communications of the synod on the subject," he stated that his language "amounted only to a declaration on his part, that *whenever the subject of education* in general was taken up by government, and submitted to parliament, he should be very happy to *confer* with Mr. Stewart, or any person belonging to the synod of Ulster."<sup>7</sup> Maynooth was now erected and endowed, but the

<sup>5</sup> Minutes of Committee.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Mr. Pelham, appended to minutes for 1796.

<sup>7</sup> Letter in minutes for 1796.

establishment of an Irish Presbyterian college was deferred for more than another half century.<sup>8</sup>

The abrupt removal of Earl Fitzwilliam from the viceroyalty produced a perfect whirlwind of political excitement. The embers of disaffection, which had been for some time smouldering, were thus kept alive, and, in a few years afterwards, they involved the whole island in the flames of an insurrection. Ireland was now fast filling up the measure of her iniquities. The three Romish provinces exhibited a miserable array of ignorance, poverty, profligacy, and outrage. Even in Ulster, laxity of principle had introduced laxity of practice—drunkenness, profane swearing, and Sabbath-breaking were fearfully prevalent, and the writings of Thomas Paine, which had been diligently circulated, had extensively diffused the leaven of infidelity. The *Peep-of-day Boys*, the *Defenders*, and the *Orangemen*, were carrying on a species of civil war.<sup>9</sup> As good men contemplated these “overflowings of ungodliness,” they looked forward with heavy hearts to approaching judgments. In the “Reasons for fasting,” adopted by the Irish Burgher Synod in 1796, and ordered to be read in all their congregations, the sins of the land are thus enumerated:—“Divine revelation is contemned—every species of wickedness is carried on in a most daring manner—blasphemy, and the most horrid prostitution of sacred oaths, are now raging abroad like an epidemic disease—relative duties are shamefully neglected and despised—the most barbarous murders have defiled our land with blood—fraudulence, rapine, and oppression are some of the leading features of the day. There is a general violation of the whole

<sup>8</sup> The foundation-stone of the Presbyterian College, Belfast, was laid in the spring of 1852.

<sup>9</sup> The *Peep-of-day Boys* sprung up in the county of Armagh. They were so called because they visited the houses of their victims early in the morning in search of arms. They were also known as “Protestant Boys,” and “Wreckers.” It is said that from time to time they drove several thousands of Romanists out of Ulster into Connaught. The “Defenders” were Romanists, who committed outrages in retaliation. It is said that the first Orange lodge was formed on the 21st September 1795, immediately after the battle of the Diamond, near Portadown; but there are traces of the system of an earlier date. M'Skimin's “Annals of Ulster,” p. 53, note.

law of God, and few are so faithful as to lift up a testimony against these enormities, or step forward in the cause of religion."

The Presbyterians, according to some, and the Romanists, according to others, were the instigators of the Rebellion of 1798, though neither statement can bear the test of a candid investigation. Many of the Presbyterians were, no doubt, implicated in the movement, but they were acting in opposition to the authority of the Church to which they belonged. There has seldom been a national commotion in which religion was so little concerned. During the heat of the struggle in the Roman Catholic provinces, the rancour of sectarian bigotry was manifested; but the society of United Irishmen was professedly based upon the extinction of all theological animosities. The separation of Ireland from Britain, and the erection of an independent republic, constituted the grand aim of the conspirators; and though, among those concerned in organising the rebellion, there were individuals of high respectability, who imagined, under the influence of a strange infatuation, that the success of their cause would have been fraught with blessings to their country, it may safely be affirmed that none of the more prominent actors enjoyed largely the confidence of any great ecclesiastical denomination. A considerable proportion of them held deistical principles; some of them were habitual drunkards;<sup>10</sup> and not a few of them were barristers of much talent, but of no fixed principles in religion, who had recently entered on their professional career, and who had little to lose in the scramble of a revolution. Strange as it may appear, the majority of the leading conspirators were nominally connected with the Established Church.<sup>11</sup> Theobald Wolfe

<sup>10</sup> In the "Memoranda of Theobald Wolfe Tone," appended to his "Memoirs," he gives an account of the convivial parties he attended during his visits to Belfast and other places. He there frequently speaks of himself and his friends as "drunk," and "very drunk!" ("Memoirs," vol. ii. pp. 379, 398, 409, 422.) It would seem, too, from these memoranda, that he and his partisans were greatly addicted to profane swearing. See also a reference to the character of James Napper Tandy, in "Memoirs and Correspondence of Lord Castlereagh," vol. i. p. 407.

<sup>11</sup> Madden's "United Irishmen," vol. i., first series, p. xi. Of the twenty

Tone, who has been described as "the principal framer and agent of the United Irish Society,"<sup>12</sup> was an ex-scholar of Trinity College, Dublin. The first society of United Irishmen formed in Belfast was instituted by that gentleman.<sup>13</sup> On a day of rejoicing in the metropolis of Ulster, in honour of the anniversary of the French Revolution, Mr. Whitley Stokes, jun., a fellow of the national university, took a conspicuous part in the celebration.<sup>14</sup> The first individual convicted of carrying on a treasonable correspondence with France, and condemned to capital punishment, was the Rev. William Jackson, a clergyman of the Established Church.<sup>15</sup> Mr. Henry Munroe, who led on the rebels at the battle of Ballinahinch, the most important conflict which occurred in Ulster in 1798, was educated an Episcopalian.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Thomas Russel, who was only prevented by his previous arrest from acting as their commander in the county of Down, was of the same communion. Counsellor Sampson, one of the most active of their partisans in Belfast, was the son of an Episcopal clergyman of Londonderry. It would, no doubt, be most absurd to charge the crimes of the United Irishmen either on the Episcopal establishment or the Irish university, for the influence of both was unquestionably exerted in the cause of loyalty and order; but it is, nevertheless, certain, that the seeds of sedition sprung up under their shadow. Some of the members of the "Historical Society" of Trinity College, such as William Corbet and Thomas

state prisoners sent to Fort George after the Rebellion, *ten* were Episcopalsians, *six* were Presbyterians, and *four* were Romanists. Dickson's "Narrative," p. 116.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon's "Ireland," vol. ii. p. 338. It can scarcely be necessary to remind the reader that all the scholars and fellows of Trinity College, Dublin, must be in communion with the Established Church.

<sup>13</sup> Madden's "United Irishmen," vol. i., first series, p. 135.

<sup>14</sup> "Annals of Ulster," by M'Skimin, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Gordon's "Ireland," vol. ii. p. 338. This unhappy man poisoned himself to avoid the ignominy of a public execution. His father is said to have officiated, at one time, in the Prerogative Court, Dublin, and Dr. Richard Jackson, vicar-general to the Archbishop of Cashel, is said to have been his brother. M'Skimin's "Annals," p. 44.

<sup>16</sup> Madden's "United Irishmen," third series, vol. i. p. 379.



Addis Emmet, had a great share in concocting the Rebellion. It is well known, too, that the students of the university furnished no small portion of the popular songs which were employed by the United Irishmen to excite and sustain the courage of their adherents.<sup>17</sup>

The Irish House of Commons was a wretched specimen of the representative system,<sup>18</sup> and the Irish Presbyterian ministers were advocates of parliamentary reform; but, as a body, they strenuously condemned all revolutionary projects. In 1793, when the proceedings of the French republicans were attracting much attention, and when many were cherishing treasonable designs, the members of the synod of Ulster issued a "Declaration," in which they expounded their political sentiments. "The synod of Ulster," say they, in this document, "feel themselves called upon explicitly to avow and publish their unshaken attachment to the genuine principles of the British constitution—an attachment early inculcated by the lessons of their fathers, and since justified by their own observation and experience. As members of civil society, they deem it not inconsistent with their public character to join with the great majority of the virtuous and enlightened men in this kingdom in expressing their opinion that a reform in the representation of the Commons' House of Parliament is essentially necessary to the perfection of the constitution, and the security and maintenance of public liberty. In seeking this reform, *they will not be seduced by the visionary theories of speculative men*, but taking the principles of the constitu-

<sup>17</sup> The authors of some of the most seditious of these songs were afterwards ministers of the Established Church. (Madden's "United Irishmen," vol. i., third series, p. 21.) At a visitation of the university, held in April 1798, "about fifty" scholars and students were "marked for expulsion." ("Dublin University Magazine" for May 1846, p. 554.) Nineteen were actually expelled, and Dr. Stokes, one of the fellows, was suspended for three years from acting as a governing member of the university. (Ibid, p. 555.) Though Dr. Stokes strongly sympathised with the disaffected party, he was not directly implicated in their proceedings. It appeared at this visitation that there were no less than four committees of United Irishmen in the college. Ibid, p. 555.

<sup>18</sup> See note 26, chapter xxix.

tion as their guide, they will co-operate with their fellow citizens by all constitutional means to obtain this great object, *rejecting with abhorrence every idea of popular tumult or foreign aid.*"

There were some ministers who probably felt little interest in the question of parliamentary reform, and who hesitated to adopt this "declaration," inasmuch as they considered it improper for a Church judicatory to "discuss political principles." On this ground it may have been open to objection; but the synod was undoubtedly justified in condemning the spirit of sedition, as it was thus only enforcing the admonition, "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change."<sup>19</sup> Throughout the five following eventful years, the great majority of the Irish Presbyterian ministers continued faithfully to act up to the spirit of this ecclesiastical manifesto. The determination with which Mr. Black, then the acknowledged leader of the synod, opposed and denounced the abettors of revolution, subjected him to considerable obloquy. At a public meeting in Derry, early in the year 1793, this gentleman boldly proclaimed the course which he subsequently pursued.<sup>20</sup> He declared that he "would steadily oppose the workings of a few seditious spirits who wished to commit the country in hostilities, to overturn the constitution, and to try 'unproved theories.' If the artifices of turbulent and discontented individuals, working on the well-meant but misguided zeal of particular districts, should excite a local insurrection, it would be quickly quelled, and the leaders exposed to the punishment and infamy due to an act of such atrocious folly. Gross abuses existed in the constitution, which ought, and he believed would speedily, be redressed; but he knew of none which would justify the risk of a civil war. He was, from education, conviction, and principle, an admirer of the

<sup>19</sup> Proverbs, xxiv. 21.

<sup>20</sup> In a letter, dated December 11, 1815, Dr. Black says, "I have been fortunate enough to perform some services of special utility, . . . and particularly in resisting, *in defiance of threats affecting my life*, the destructive and wide-spread delusions of 1797 and 1798." This letter, which was written at a time when he was about to be presented with a tribute of respect, is entered in the session-book of the 1st Derry congregation.

British constitution. With a fair and honest representation in the House of Commons, it was fitted to promote more real and durable political happiness than any other existing form of government in the world, and he had no hesitation in declaring that he preferred it to any republican form, either ancient or modern."<sup>21</sup>

The Rev. John Thomson of Carnmoney,<sup>22</sup> the Rev. Thomas Cuming of Armagh,<sup>23</sup> the Rev. Thomas Henry of Randalstown,<sup>24</sup> and other influential ministers, strenuously maintained the same principles. But, in several districts of Down and Antrim, opinions of a very different description were industriously propagated. The important town of Belfast was the head-quarters of disaffection in Ulster.<sup>25</sup> This place had been long distinguished for its public spirit, but, on the breaking out of the French Revolution, a number of its most active political characters became ardent admirers of republicanism, and soon afterwards entered into correspondence with parties of kindred sentiments in Dub-

<sup>21</sup> The speech, from which these extracts are taken, may be found fully reported in the *Belfast News-Letter* of the 25th of January 1793.

<sup>22</sup> Mr. Thomson was ordained minister of Carnmoney in 1767, and died in 1828, in the eighty-seventh year of his age. He possessed a vigorous mind, as well as a dignified deportment, and maintained throughout life the character of a zealous and consistent Calvinist. He was perhaps better acquainted with the principles of ecclesiastical discipline than any other member of the synod.

<sup>23</sup> Mr. Cuming was originally minister of 1st Dromore, where he was ordained in 1784. In 1796 he removed to Armagh, where he died in 1816. He was for many years clerk of the synod of Ulster. For a farther account of this minister, see Stuart's "Armagh," p. 498.

<sup>24</sup> Mr. Henry was ordained minister of Randalstown in 1786, and died in 1830. He was moderator of the synod in 1803. He was the son of the Rev. William Henry, minister, first of 2d Dromore, and afterwards of Comber, county Down. Mr. Henry of Randalstown, commonly called Doctor Henry, as he was a medical practitioner, was, when advanced in life, a man of remarkably noble and venerable aspect. He was the father of the Rev. P. S. Henry, D.D., President of Queen's College, Belfast.

<sup>25</sup> In one of his letters, Lord Castlereagh speaks of Derry as "the counterpoise to Belfast, and the rallying point for the loyalty of the North." ("Memoirs and Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 33.) Belfast is now as distinguished for its loyalty as it was in 1798 for its disaffection.

lin, for the purpose of maturing those treasonable designs which eventually involved the country in so much misery and confusion. Even in Belfast, however, several of the leading Presbyterians discountenanced, from the very outset, the spirit of sedition. The Rev. Dr. Bruce,<sup>26</sup> a minister respected alike for his gentlemanly bearing, his sagacity, and his attainments in general literature, objected from the first to the extreme views of some of his fellow-citizens. He had much intercourse with the higher classes in and around the town, and as great reliance was placed on the soundness of his judgment, his strong disapproval of the Society of United Irishmen no doubt deterred many from joining the association.

In these perilous times, the Rev. Dr. McDowel of Dublin was exerting himself, in the spirit of an apostolic minister, to stem the tide of folly and ungodliness. On his settlement in Mary's Abbey, his charge amounted only to a few families,<sup>27</sup> but he was now the pastor of a large and flourishing congregation. A pious Baptist minister, who visited Dublin about this period, bears the most honourable testimony to the success of his labours. "I have," says he, "found much more religion here already than I expected to meet with during the whole of my stay. I am at the house of a Mr. Hutton, late high-sheriff of the city, a gentleman of opulence, respectability, and evangelical piety. He is by profession a Calvinistic Presbyterian, an elder of Dr. McDowel's

<sup>26</sup> Dr. Bruce was the son of the Rev. Samuel Bruce of Dublin, and grandson of the Rev. Michael Bruce of Holywood. He was originally connected with the synod of Ulster, as minister of Lisburn. He subsequently removed to Strand Street congregation, Dublin, and finally, in 1790, settled in Belfast, as minister of the 1st congregation. Though now connected with the presbytery of Antrim, he still kept up an intercourse with the ministers of the synod of Ulster, and had much influence in all matters relating to the Presbyterian Church. For upwards of thirty years, he presided over the Belfast Academy. His appearance was uncommonly dignified, and, as he passed along the street, even a stranger might have recognised "the son of ancient kings." Dr. Bruce died in 1841, in the eighty-fourth year of his age.

<sup>27</sup> Dr. Horner states that "about six families and a few individuals constituted the entire of his audience at the commencement of his ministry" in Mary's Abbey. "Funeral Sermon," p. 19.



church."<sup>28</sup> Alderman Hutton and Dr. M'Dowel laboured together in the Gospel with singular cordiality, and their exertions contributed largely to that genuine revival of religion which has since so much purified and elevated the Protestantism of the Irish metropolis.<sup>29</sup> Prior to the breaking out of the Rebellion, "a few persons of the highest respectability, whose minds had been touched with a deep sense of the importance of eternal things, desirous to profit by the awful appearance of the times, and anxious for their country's welfare, came to the determination of having meetings for prayer, with a particular view to the state of the nation."<sup>30</sup> Dr. M'Dowel was one of the ministers by whom these meetings were conducted, and the house of his elder was the place where they assembled. Here, every Friday evening, these pious men commended themselves and a guilty nation to the mercy of their Father in heaven. Happy had it been for the Church had all the Presbyterian ministers in the North been similarly occupied.

When it is considered that the ramifications of the Society of United Irishmen extended into every part of Ulster—that the state of religion was extremely low—and that almost all the Presbyterian ministers then derived by far the larger portion of their income from the people, it is somewhat remarkable that so

<sup>28</sup> "Memoirs of Pearce." "Works of Rev. Andrew Fuller," p. 772. Alderman Hutton was lord-mayor of Dublin a few years afterwards. "He was voted a gold box and a valuable piece of plate, and *his great attention to the observance of the Sabbath* is mentioned in three public addresses from the city." "Life and Times of Lady Huntingdon," vol. ii. pp. 226, 227.

<sup>29</sup> The late Rev. W. Benjamin Mathias of the Bethesda chapel, Dublin, was one of the most efficient ministers ever connected with the Established Church of Ireland. "Happily for the young Benjamin, and *for many others*, the late Rev. Dr. M'Dowel of Mary's Abbey had been appointed his guardian." ("Memorials of the Rev. W. B. Mathias," p. 5.) "The faithful proclamation of the Word in the Bethesda chapel has been attended with the happiest results. The light has shone from thence to the remotest parts of the kingdom; and more than *five-and-twenty* young men from that congregation have passed through the university, and are now (1839) consecrating their talents to the Redeemer's glory and service." "Life and Times of Lady Huntingdon," vol. ii. p. 230.

<sup>30</sup> "Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon," vol. ii. p. 219.

few of their order were implicated in the Rebellion. There were then between fifty and sixty secession ministers in the country, and yet not one of them appears to have been even accused of treason. The pastor of a seceding congregation near Belfast,<sup>31</sup> who steadfastly refused to compromise his loyalty, at length found his position so uncomfortable, that he voluntarily resigned his charge; and others who boldly denounced the proceedings of the disaffected, suffered no inconsiderable amount of personal annoyance.<sup>32</sup> Several members of the synod of Ulster were infected with the revolutionary mania, but a contemporary, who possessed the best means of information, and who delivered his testimony under circumstances in which, if untrue, it might have been easily refuted, has recorded his conviction, that "not one" ordained minister "out of twelve" was "*at all implicated*."<sup>33</sup> In proportion to its extent, the presbytery of Antrim was much more deeply committed than the synod of Ulster, as two of the nine ministers belonging to it were obliged to leave the country, and a third was kept for some time in imprisonment.<sup>34</sup> The

<sup>31</sup> The Rev. Francis Pringle of Gilnahirk. Finding that his opposition to the United Irishmen embroiled him with his congregation, Mr. Pringle emigrated to America.

<sup>32</sup> Among these was the venerable Mr. Arrott, the seceding minister of Markethill.

<sup>33</sup> This statement may be found in the *Belfast News-Letter* of the 27th of July 1798. It appears from a MS. note in his own handwriting, attached to the copy at present in the Belfast Linen-Hall library, that the author was Mr. H. Joy, the intimate friend of Dr. Bruce. Perhaps no individual in the North of Ireland was more competent to give an opinion upon the subject.

<sup>34</sup> The ministers obliged to leave the country were the Rev. Arthur M'Mahon of Holywood and the Rev. William Sinclair of Newtownards. Mr. M'Mahon was obliged to make his escape to France some time before the breaking out of the Rebellion. He was originally a licentiate of the presbytery of Antrim (see chap. xxix., note 80), but, in 1789, was ordained to the pastoral charge of the congregation of Kilrea. In 1794, the Rev. John Beatty, minister of Holywood, in connection with the presbytery of Antrim, died, after a pastorate of about fifty-seven years, and Mr. M'Mahon was elected his successor. He was a man of daring character, and of considerable literary attainments. In the summer of 1797, he exerted himself to the uttermost to induce the United Irishmen to commence the insurrection forthwith, but having failed in this attempt, he escaped soon afterwards, with

Covenanters were quite as much involved. They had then only eight or nine ministers in Ireland, and of these two or three were more or less compromised.<sup>35</sup> It is clear, however, that, as a body, even they did not approve of the proceedings of the United Irishmen. In a document, published in 1796, and entitled, a "Seasonable and Necessary Information," the Reformed Presbytery vindicated its character by declaring its "highest abhorrence" of all tumultuous and disorderly meetings," and signifying its disapproval of "anything said or done prejudicial to the peace, the safety, or property of any individual or society."<sup>36</sup>

The year 1798 presents one of the darkest passages in the ecclesiastical history of Ireland. The Rev. James Worral of Larne, another member of the presbytery of Antrim, was arrested, but, as no charge could be proved against him, he was liberated after a short imprisonment. On the Continent, he embraced the military profession, and, it is said, with what truth I know not, that he became distinguished as *General Muck*. Mr. Sinclair was imprisoned, and, at length, with some difficulty, obtained permission to transport himself to America. The Rev. William Gibson escaped arrest and fled to America. The Rev. William Staveland, the most distinguished covenanting minister in Ulster, was arrested, and charged with being a general officer in the army of the United Irishmen, but the accusation could not be substantiated, and seems to have been quite unfounded. The Rev. Joseph Orr, another covenanting minister, was arrested, but was almost immediately liberated. Messrs. Black and Wylie, two young men who had now completed their education for the ministry of the Covenanting Church, found it necessary to remove to America. Dr. Wylie died in the autumn of 1852, in the eightieth year of his age, and fifty-third of his ministry. At the time of his death, he was pastor of the 1st Reformed Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, and professor *emeritus* of ancient languages in the University of Pennsylvania. Of the more humble sufferers during the reign of terror, the case of no one awakened more general sympathy than that of Daniel English, a young man connected with the Covenanting Church, who was executed on the bridge of Connor. He was a pious and amiable youth, and it was believed that the evidence on which he was convicted was untrue. He was conducted from the guard-house in Ballymena to Connor, a distance of about four miles, dressed in his grave-clothes, and accompanied by a large concourse, who joined together in singing the 119th Psalm. As the sad company travelled along, the "grave sweet melody" of so many voices echoed from hill to hill, and produced a most solemn impression.

<sup>35</sup> The Rev. William Gibson escaped arrest and fled to America. The Rev. William Staveland, the most distinguished covenanting minister in Ulster, was arrested, and charged with being a general officer in the army of the United Irishmen, but the accusation could not be substantiated, and seems to have been quite unfounded. The Rev. Joseph Orr, another covenanting minister, was arrested, but was almost immediately liberated. Messrs. Black and Wylie, two young men who had now completed their education for the ministry of the Covenanting Church, found it necessary to remove to America. Dr. Wylie died in the autumn of 1852, in the eightieth year of his age, and fifty-third of his ministry. At the time of his death, he was pastor of the 1st Reformed Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, and professor *emeritus* of ancient languages in the University of Pennsylvania. Of the more humble sufferers during the reign of terror, the case of no one awakened more general sympathy than that of Daniel English, a young man connected with the Covenanting Church, who was executed on the bridge of Connor. He was a pious and amiable youth, and it was believed that the evidence on which he was convicted was untrue. He was conducted from the guard-house in Ballymena to Connor, a distance of about four miles, dressed in his grave-clothes, and accompanied by a large concourse, who joined together in singing the 119th Psalm. As the sad company travelled along, the "grave sweet melody" of so many voices echoed from hill to hill, and produced a most solemn impression.

<sup>36</sup> This document may be found in the *Northern Star* of the 10th of October 1796. It is dated October 3 of the same year, and is said to be "done

clesiastical, as well as in the civil history of Ireland. When the insurrection actually took place, many seized on the occasion as an opportunity for indulging their private malice ; and distrust, treachery, and falsehood pervaded almost all the departments of society. The rebels, particularly in the South, exhibited, in the hour of victory, the ferocity of savages ; and the yeomanry,<sup>37</sup> in their turn, in many instances, perpetrated the most disgraceful acts of rapine and violence. Means utterly unwarrantable were adopted to secure the condemnation of parties suspected of disloyalty. The vilest informers were openly encouraged, the minions of government, even when guilty of horrid crimes, were screened from punishment, and the conduct of the state officials was often better fitted to foment than to quiet a rebellion. There were very few among the ministers of the Word who had "understanding of the times," and who attempted prayerfully and energetically to awaken a deluded people to consideration and repentance. There appeared to be "no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land ;" the wicked "walked on every in the name of the Reformed Church in the counties of Antrim and Down," but no signature is attached to it.

<sup>37</sup> In October 1796, government began to provide an armed yeomanry to assist the other troops, in the event either of foreign invasion or of an insurrection of the United Irishmen. Sir Richard Musgrave, though by no means a friend to nonconformity, bears honourable testimony to the fidelity of the Presbyterians who were thus enrolled. He says, "In the counties of Fermanagh, Tyrone, Derry, and Armagh, there were fourteen thousand yeomen, . . . and they were so loyal, and so well disciplined, that General Knox, who commanded at Dungannon, reported, in the summer of 1798, that he would rest the safety of these counties on their fidelity and bravery ; and, much to the honour of the Presbyterians, *three-fourths of them were of that order.* . . . Though the Presbyterians lay under a general imputation of being disloyal, it appears that *a great portion of them were steadily attached to the constitution, and were ready to draw their swords in its defence against foreign and domestic foes.* After many minute inquiries, *I could not discover an instance of a Presbyterian yeoman having violated his oath of allegiance ;* but many shameful instances of the kind occurred among the Romish yeomen in Leinster, Connaught, and Munster." ("Memoirs," p. 194.) The statements in the text do not refer to the yeomanry of the counties here mentioned by Sir Richard Musgrave, but to those of other districts.



side;" and many hearts trembled as the political volcano, which had long threatened a terrible eruption, commenced to pour forth its fiery lava of war and desolation.

The insurrection in Ulster was confined to the two counties of Down and Antrim, and even here it was suppressed in the course of a few days. When the northern rebels heard of the cruelties perpetrated on their Protestant brethren, in other parts of Ireland, by the Roman Catholic insurgents, they threw down their arms in disgust and indignation. But though the actual danger was soon over, there was long diffused throughout the mass of the community a feeling of insecurity and apprehension. In consequence of the state of the country, the Antiburgher Synod did not meet during the year of the Rebellion. The Burgher Synod met at Armagh on the 3d of July according to appointment, and, after hastily despatching some necessary business, broke up on the same day. The synod of Ulster did not meet until the 28th of August, when it assembled at Lurgan.<sup>38</sup> The French, under General Humbert, had now landed at Killala, and the news of their arrival had partially revived the hopes of the disaffected throughout Ulster;<sup>39</sup> but the synod proceeded, notwithstanding, to express its strong disapprobation of the conduct of those indivi-

<sup>38</sup> The following advertisement, which appears in the *Belfast News-Letter* of August 10, 1798, attests the confidence reposed by the military authorities of the day in the loyalty of the ministers of the General Synod :—

“GENERAL SYNOD.

“The members of the General Synod of Ulster will please to take notice, that Tuesday, the 28th instant, is the day appointed for the meeting of the General Synod at Lurgan.

“M. NELSON, *Moderator*.

“August 9, 1798.

“The meeting above-mentioned is to take place with my permission; and I desire that every protection and accommodation may be afforded by the military in the northern district to the members thereof, in passing to and from Lurgan for the purpose.

“G. NUGENT, *Major-General*,

“*Belfast, August 9, 1798.*

“*Commanding Northern District.*

“*To the officers commanding troops and detachments in the Northern District.*”

<sup>39</sup> The French cast anchor in the bay of Killala on the 22d of August.

duals under its care who had violated their allegiance. The sum of £500 was unanimously voted to the government "as the contribution of the members of the body towards the defence of the kingdom;" and the several presbyteries were enjoined, "under penalty of severe censure," to "institute a solemn inquiry" into the conduct of ministers and licentiates charged with "seditious and treasonable practices," and to make a faithful report of the result of their investigations to the next annual meeting.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, a pastoral address to the Presbyterian people, earnestly remonstrating with those who had been "led into open outrage and rebellion," was unanimously adopted, and ordered to be read from the pulpit in every congregation.<sup>41</sup> Whilst the members of synod, in this document, make a most pathetic appeal to the better feelings of those who had taken part in the revolt, they, at the same time, bear testimony to the peaceable deportment of the mass of the Presbyterian population. "Whilst we lament," say they, "the late disturbance of the public peace, we derive no small satisfaction from the conviction, that the great body of the people with whom we are connected have given, by their conduct, the most decisive proofs how greatly they condemned all acts of violence."

When the General Synod met in June 1799, and when the several presbyteries had given in their reports, it appeared that

<sup>40</sup> Minutes of Synod for 1798.

<sup>41</sup> This address was also printed and extensively circulated. At the same meeting, the synod unanimously agreed upon addresses to the king and the lord-lieutenant, expressive of fidelity to the crown and attachment to the constitution. The address to the king was transmitted through the lord-lieutenant, who was particularly gratified with this seasonable exhibition of loyalty. "I am sensible," said his Excellency, in his reply, "that when the public safety has formerly been menaced, either by domestic traitors or foreign invaders, no description of his majesty's subjects were more active in all the duties of allegiance than the Protestant dissenters of the province of Ulster. To find this disposition so cordial on the present occasion affords me sincere satisfaction; and your avowing your principles at the moment when the hopes of the disaffected were revived by the actual landing of the enemy, could not fail to have had a beneficial influence on the community. I shall have particular pleasure in immediately transmitting your loyal and dutiful address to our sovereign."

very few of the ministers had been concerned in the Rebellion,<sup>42</sup> and that *only one* had suffered a capital punishment.<sup>43</sup> It was stated that, of those involved, "two were still in confinement,<sup>44</sup> some had expressed their sincere contrition, others were no longer connected with the body, and the remainder had, either voluntarily or with the permission of government, removed from the kingdom."<sup>45</sup> A resolution was accordingly adopted, to the effect that, "whilst the synod reflected with sorrow on the scandal brought upon its reputation by the indiscretion and misconduct of a few misguided and unworthy individuals," its general loyalty was not fairly liable to suspicion.

It is an important fact, that a large proportion of the members

<sup>42</sup> Sir Richard Musgrave ("Memoirs," appendix, xii. p. 50) gives the names of eighteen "dissenting ministers in the counties of Down and Antrim implicated in the Rebellion of 1798," but his list is calculated to mislead, as four of the individuals he mentions were merely probationers, and no charge whatever was established against some of the others. Three of the ministers mentioned by Musgrave belonged to the presbytery of Antrim. It would appear from the Minutes of the Synod of Ulster that only *eight* of its ministers were convicted of treasonable practices.

<sup>43</sup> The Rev. James Porter of Greyabbey, who was condemned by the sentence of a court-martial held at Newtownards, and executed in his own meeting-house green on the 2d of July 1798. Mr. Porter was ordained minister of Greyabbey in 1787. He was a handsome and accomplished man; but it has been remarked, that the clerical profession "was probably the pursuit for which the nature of his talents and attainments was the least adapted." (Madden's "United Irishmen," third series, vol. i. p. 361.) He possessed acknowledged ability as a writer, particularly as a wit and a satirist. The Honourable Alexander Porter, who died at Oaklawn, in the state of Louisiana, in 1844, and who was then the only Irishman in the senate of the United States, was the son of this minister. Another of his sons was attorney-general for the state of Louisiana.

<sup>44</sup> The Rev. Dr. Dickson of Portaferry, and the Rev. John Smyth of Kilrea. The Rev. Samuel Barber of Rathfriland was also kept for a considerable time in confinement.

<sup>45</sup> Minutes of Synod for 1799. The Rev. James Simpson of Newtownards, the Rev. John Glendy of Maghera, and the Rev. Thomas Ledlie Birch of Saintfield, were permitted to emigrate to America. Mr. Archibald Warrick, a probationer of the presbytery of Belfast, was executed at Kirkcubbin in October 1798. Several other licentiates were implicated, but Mr. Warrick was the only one put to death.

of the synod of Ulster, who were concerned in the Rebellion, were the noted abettors of New-Light principles.<sup>46</sup> Among these clerical conspirators no one was more notorious, and at the same time more deeply committed, than the Rev. William Steel Dickson, D.D. This remarkable man was educated under the care of the Rev. Robert White of Templepatrick, and as his teacher was one of the most zealous and successful propagators of the New-Light doctrine, it is not strange that the pupil soon adopted his theological sentiments. In 1771, Mr. Dickson was ordained minister of Glashy, and, after remaining in that charge about nine years, he removed in 1780 to Portaferry. He possessed great energy of character, combined with prepossessing manners; and as he was a graceful, ready, and effective speaker, he soon attracted considerable notice. In the electioneering contests of the period, he was early distinguished as an ardent partisan, and unhappily for himself, as well as for his church, he became better known as a political demagogue than as a sober, pious, and edifying pastor. When the Society of United Irishmen was established, he warmly espoused its cause, and, in 1798, he proved so unmindful of what he owed to his own character as a minister of the Prince of Peace, that he permitted himself to be appointed commander of the rebels for the county of Down.<sup>47</sup> He was arrested on the very eve of the insurrection, but evidence was wanting for his capital conviction, and for three years he was kept as a state prisoner at Fort George, in Scotland. His subse-

<sup>46</sup> It has been already stated, that of the eighteen individuals mentioned by Musgrave, only fourteen were ordained ministers, and at least *nine* of these fourteen preached New-Light doctrine. The Rev. Sinclair Kelburn of Rosemary Street congregation, Belfast, was one of the orthodox ministers of the General Synod accused of being involved in seditious proceedings. He possessed a considerable amount of popular talent, but he wanted decision of character. He was kept in confinement for a considerable time on a charge of treason.

<sup>47</sup> In 1812, Dr. Dickson published "A Narrative" of his "Confinement and Exile," in which he disingenuously attempts to deny this statement, but its truth is now admitted on all hands. (See Teeling's "Personal Narrative," pp. 226-228, and Madden's "United Irishmen," second series, vol. ii. p. 431.) Dr. Dickson died in 1824.



quent career was almost one continued series of misfortunes. After his liberation, he obtained, with some difficulty, a call from the congregation of 2d Keady, but as he was not admitted to a share of the Royal Bounty, this settlement afforded him a very slender maintenance, and, in 1815, he was obliged to resign the charge from bodily infirmity. He then removed to Belfast, where he spent the remainder of his life, supported by the weekly contributions of a few of his former acquaintances. "I saw the remains of that great man," says one of his admirers, "deposited in a pauper's grave, where not even a stone marks the narrow house of his repose. Some eight or ten individuals formed the entire funeral procession."<sup>48</sup> Such was the end of a man of eloquence and of genius. Had his rare endowments been turned to good account, he would have been one of the brightest ornaments of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland; but his name is now inseparably connected with abortive treason, and his history is an admonition to all the ministers of Christ to beware of shipwreck on the barren rock of political agitation.

The year 1798 forms a crisis in the history of the synod of Ulster. The misery then entailed on thousands and tens of thousands furnished an emphatic and salutary rebuke to that intensely political spirit which had been cherished by too many Presbyterian ministers. A pastor, it is true, is still a citizen of this world, and, as such, he should seek to promote the wellbeing of the commonwealth; but when he gives himself up either to the pursuit, or even the discussion of its secularities, he supplies evidence that he does not duly appreciate the blessings of the better country, and that he does not know how to "magnify his

<sup>48</sup> "Irish Unitarian Magazine," vol. ii., No. 10, p. 334. Dr. Montgomery is an excellent witness as to what he has himself seen, but his statements, as an historian, are not to be so implicitly received. His "Outlines of the History of Presbyterianism in Ireland," in the "Irish Unitarian Magazine," are a strange medley of truth and fiction. At present, a single example of his inaccuracy may be mentioned. In page 333, he asserts that, in 1798, "*the jails were choked*" with the bodies of Presbyterian ministers. Here is certainly a choice specimen of the hyperbolic style of writing. A very small portion of one of the jails would have been sufficient for the accommodation of all the Presbyterian ministers then in confinement.

office." The melancholy scenes of the Rebellion, to some extent, awakened the ministers, as well as the people of Ulster, from their dream of carnal security, and led them to think with increasing seriousness of the interests of eternity. Shortly after this period, the spiritual eye discerns some faint indications of that revival of religion which has since so much improved the character of Irish Presbyterianism.

The scheme of a legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland now began to occupy public attention, and it speedily appeared that all the influence which government could command would be exerted to effect its accomplishment. The project, notwithstanding, encountered the most resolute resistance, and, for a time, its success seemed to be extremely problematical. Various means were used to secure the concurrence of the different parties interested. As Episcopalians formed only one-eighth of the inhabitants of Ireland, it was stated that, so long as the country remained an independent kingdom, the political and social influence of other denominations could not be increased without imperilling the very existence of the Protestant establishment; but that, if the union were carried, the Church of England and Ireland would be then sustained by a majority of the whole confederated population, so that government would be in a position in which it could safely afford to deal more liberally with both Roman Catholics and Presbyterians. Romanists were led to expect that the union would be immediately followed by their complete emancipation; and though, at this crisis, the weight of Presbyterian support might not have been sufficient to determine the fluctuations of the political balance, the ministry felt extremely anxious that it should not be found in the scale of the opposition. There is no doubt that several prospective advantages were held out to the members of the synod of Ulster to induce them to acquiesce in the arrangement. They had been encouraged, a few years before, to expect the establishment of a collegiate seminary, where their theological students could enjoy the benefits of a home education; but, on the sudden recall of Earl Fitzwilliam from the viceroyalty, their hopes had been rudely blighted. It was now proposed that their candidates for

the ministry should attend a university to be founded at Armagh—that government should there endow a divinity professorship for their special accommodation—that the grant to their ministers should be liberally augmented—and that, as a still farther token of state favour, a royal commissioner, of their own communion, should sit in their annual meeting, as in the General Assembly of the Established Church of Scotland.<sup>49</sup> Some of these overtures were soon afterwards abandoned. Several influential ministers, fearing that the presence of a royal commissioner would either interfere with their freedom of debate, or be interpreted as a proof of their readiness to submit to civil dictation, decidedly objected to his appointment, so that the matter was never formally submitted to the consideration of the synod; and the English cabinet, when consulted by those entrusted with the management of the affairs of Ireland, refused to sanction the establishment of a university at Armagh.<sup>50</sup> But the propriety of adding to the Royal Bounty was freely admitted by the British government.

The state endowment had been hitherto placed at the disposal of the ministers themselves, and had been usually distributed among them, in equal shares, by an agent of their own appointment. A new arrangement was now suggested. It was proposed that the members of the synod of Ulster should be divided into three classes: “the first class, containing about fifteen mi-

<sup>49</sup> In a letter from Lord Cornwallis to the Duke of Portland, dated Dublin Castle, July 29, 1799, the lord-lieutenant says—“It has long been considered that the establishment of a second university in this kingdom, and especially in the province of Ulster, so as to assist the education of dissenters, and to promote an emulation in the University of Dublin, would be of great public benefit. . . . *I have held out generally to that body [the dissenters] that there was a disposition in government to attend to the interests of their clergy, and to their education.*” (“Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh,” vol. ii. pp. 364, 365) See also “Plan for strengthening the connection between the Government and the Presbyterian Synod of Ulster,” dated February 5, 1799. “Memoirs and Correspondence,” vol. iii. pp. 172–74.

<sup>50</sup> See letter from Duke of Portland to the lord-lieutenant, dated Whitehall, August 31, 1799. “Mem. and Corresp. of Viscount Castlereagh,” vol. ii. p. 381–86.

nisters, in the cities and large towns, to receive [from government] from one to two hundred pounds per annum; the second class, containing about seventy ministers, in the more populous congregations, to receive eighty pounds per annum; and the third class, containing about one hundred ministers, to receive sixty pounds per annum."<sup>51</sup> This scheme of distribution was afterwards considerably modified, and some delay took place before government was prepared to make any official announcement of its designs; but at length Mr. Black reported, at the annual meeting in June 1800, that "he had waited, by desire, on Lord Castlereagh, secretary to his Excellency the lord-lieutenant, when he was informed by his lordship that it was the intention of his majesty's ministers to make a provision for the dissenting clergy on terms different from those on which the present Regium Donum was paid to them, and that his lordship had expressed a desire for the appointment by the synod of one or more of their number to confer with government on the subject."<sup>52</sup> A committee, consisting of the Rev. John Bankhead<sup>53</sup> the moderator, Mr. Black, and Dr. Little,<sup>54</sup> was accordingly nominated. After

<sup>51</sup> "Mem. and Corresp. of Viscount Castlereagh," vol. iii. p. 173.

<sup>52</sup> Minutes of Synod of Ulster for 1800.

<sup>53</sup> Mr. Bankhead was ordained minister of Ballycarry in August 1763, and died in July 1833, having nearly completed an incumbency of seventy years. He was the father of the celebrated physician in whose arms the great Lord Londonderry expired.

<sup>54</sup> The Rev. Joseph Little, commonly known as Dr. Little, from his acting as a medical practitioner, was ordained minister of Killileagh in Nov. 1763. He died in July 1813. He possessed great natural talents, but his conduct was not always in harmony with his professional character. The traditions of his eccentricities are still current throughout the county of Down. He was settled at Killileagh when one of the Methodist missionaries first visited the place. The preacher was addressing a crowd collected to hear him, and was explaining the meaning of some Greek word, when Dr. Little, who was one of his auditors, immediately hastened home for his Greek Testament. On his return, he presented the expositor with the volume, and requested him to translate a particular passage. The stranger had no sooner admitted that he was unacquainted with the language than, to his amazement, his examiner proceeded publicly to administer to him a grave and eloquent rebuke for presuming to expound a book which he could not read. Dr.



waiting on Lord Castlereagh, and ascertaining the outline of his plan, the deputies reported the result of their conference to a special meeting of synod, convened at Lurgan in the month of October following.

As might have been anticipated, the new scheme of distribution was no sooner known than it was condemned by many in terms of unmeasured severity. The proposal to take the management of the grant out of the hands of the recipients created much dissatisfaction. As the plan rather invidiously distinguished a few ministers residing in the larger towns, by placing them in its highest class of patronage, a cry was immediately raised that Mr. Black, who was understood to have had no small share in its concoction, was thus attempting to introduce a modified prelacy among Irish Presbyterians. The ministers of the poorer congregations, whose interests and feelings were least consulted in the contemplated arrangement, were disappointed and chagrined; and, as they constituted a large portion of the synod, they were able to control its deliberations. Some of the arguments urged most strenuously were, however, more specious than satisfactory. It had never hitherto been hinted that the ecclesiastical status of a pastor could be at all affected by the amount either of his stipend or his bounty. It was notorious that the clergy of the Established Church of Scotland were unequally remunerated, that the sum paid by one congregation towards the support of its spiritual instructor greatly exceeded the contributions of another, and that a double portion of the *Regium Donum* itself was often voted to pastors in peculiar circumstances;<sup>55</sup> but it was now confidently maintained that the unequal distribution of the grant would destroy the parity of the members of the synod. A more substantial objection was directed against the

Little then desired the parties assembled to go home, stating that the man was evidently incompetent to instruct them. His command was obeyed, and thus one of the earliest attempts to plant Methodism in Killileagh was defeated.

<sup>55</sup> Before this period, the ministers of small frontier congregations, who received a very scanty stipend, were often allowed a double portion of the *Regium Donum*.

principle which was to regulate the classification. It was alleged that the scheme of government was not what a considerate regard to the wants of the recipients would have dictated and required. The minister who should have had the strongest claim to the assistance of the state, on the ground of the poverty of his congregation, was to receive a comparatively small addition to his income, whilst he who already enjoyed a more liberal maintenance was to obtain a double portion of the royal endowment.

The opponents of classification had not, however, all the argument to themselves, and the reasoning employed on the other side was not without plausibility. It was well known that the necessary expenses of the city pastor were much greater than those of any of his rural co-presbyters, and it was accordingly maintained that he had an equitable claim to a larger share, as well of bounty, as of stipend. It was added that, even if the ministers of towns were now dealt with somewhat more liberally than others, the Church would eventually reap the benefit, for certain congregations would henceforth be regarded as so many places of preferment, to which the junior pastors, who diligently improved their talents, might hopefully aspire. Many of the laity disliked the increase of the grant, because they feared it would promote the political subserviency of their ministers; but it was urged that, on the scheme suggested, it was much less likely to realise their apprehensions than on that which had been hitherto adopted, inasmuch as, if the augmented bounty were equally distributed, the majority of the members of the synod would draw nearly the two-thirds of their entire income from the state, whereas, according to the plan now submitted, each individual would be paid a nearly equal sum by the government and the people.

When the synod assembled at Lurgan, in the autumn of 1800, it was soon obvious that the system of classification had few advocates. There was an unusually full attendance of both ministers and elders, and the report of the committee, appointed at the previous meeting, led to a very animated discussion; but as government had not thought it prudent as yet to submit a detailed statement of the intended scheme of distribution, many were unwilling to commit themselves to any very definite reso-

lution. After some debating, it was agreed that, as soon as the moderator should receive "an official communication from Lord Castlereagh, containing an arrangement of the plan," the synod should be again convened, and that a letter should, meanwhile, be addressed to him, expressing the "most anxious wish" of the meeting, that "any addition which the wisdom and liberality of government might see fit to make to the Royal Bounty, should be granted on terms similar to those on which the synod at present enjoyed the favour."<sup>56</sup> To show the importance attached to this communication, a deputation, consisting of the moderator and George Birch, Esq., one of the most respectable elders of the Church,<sup>57</sup> was chosen to present it to the Irish chief secretary. These gentlemen, who soon afterwards executed their commission, found that government was resolved to abide strictly by the principle of classification. Lord Castlereagh received them with great politeness, but distinctly informed them that his majesty's ministers had determined on two points; first, that they would not make any farther provision for Presbyterian ministers on the present plan; and, second, that should they recommend an augmentation of the grant, unequal distribution would form part of the arrangement.<sup>58</sup>

In proposing this new scheme of endowment for the Irish Presbyterian Church, it would seem that government was chiefly actuated by those purely secular considerations which ordinarily have weight with prudent and calculating statesmen. Presbyterian ministers were now, to a great extent, dependent for subsistence on the voluntary contributions of their flocks; and, to maintain their popularity, they were sometimes strongly tempted to take the lead in political movements of very questionable expediency. An increase of the royal grant would place them in more independent circumstances in relation to the people, so that they would be less likely to give any countenance to the spirit of faction or sedition. It was expected that the state, at the same time,

<sup>56</sup> Minutes of Synod of October 1800.

<sup>57</sup> Dr. Birch attended this meeting as elder for the congregation of Moneyreagh.

<sup>58</sup> Minutes of Synod for 1801.

would thus increase its own direct influence over the spiritual guides of an important section of the population of Ireland. In a letter, written shortly before this period, by a British cabinet minister to the lord-lieutenant, it is expressly declared, that "*a principal object* in increasing and remodelling their allowance was to make them more dependent, and render them more amenable to government."<sup>59</sup> It was thought that the system of classification was pre-eminently calculated to secure this object, as the influential ministers would thus be more largely indebted to the public purse than if the grant were divided according to the existing plan of distribution.

In their arrangements for the augmentation of the grant, it is plain that the leading statesmen of the day aimed at the political subserviency of the Presbyterian ministers of Ulster, and, when impartially estimated, their motives were as destitute of piety as of patriotism; but the King of the Church "taketh the wise in their own craftiness," and the history of another half century has demonstrated that the results are very different from what many are known to have anticipated. In point of fact, the augmentation of the bounty has greatly strengthened the Protestant interest in Ireland,<sup>60</sup> as well as indirectly contributed to the political

<sup>59</sup> Letter from Duke of Portland to the lord-lieutenant, dated Whitehall, August 31, 1799. "Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh," vol. ii. p. 384.

<sup>60</sup> The withdrawal of the Regium Donum, as at present suggested by English voluntaries, would give a tremendous shock as well to Protestantism as to British power in Ireland. It would be easy to show that the Irish Presbyterian Church has done more for the social and spiritual improvement of the country than the Episcopal establishment, with all its revenues. And it is a fact well worthy the consideration of English voluntaries, many of whom are no doubt actuated by pure and patriotic motives, that, prior to 1784, when Irish Presbyterian ministers received the smallest dividend of Regium Donum, they were at the lowest ebb in point of education, zeal, and doctrinal soundness. The increase of the grant has been connected with their advancement in intellectual culture, piety, and efficiency. The members of the Irish General Assembly are now nearly ninefold the number of those ejected by the Act of Uniformity. (See chapter xvii., note 16, and the text.) English nonconformists, left to the resources of Voluntaryism, have not certainly advanced in the same ratio. By waging war against all ecclesiastical endow-



power of Presbyterianism. Throughout the eventful scenes of the last fifty years, its pastors, as a body, have displayed a becoming self-respect, by refusing to become the submissive tools of any administration. When they have conceived themselves called upon to give utterance to their sentiments in reference to matters of public interest, they have repeatedly opposed the schemes of men in office, and they are still regarded by all the foes of constitutional freedom as a rather unmanageable generation. It is but fair to add, that many circumstances have conspired to assist them in maintaining their independence. The formidable attitude which Romanism has assumed since the date of the Act of Union has added to the value of Irish Presbyterianism in the eyes of British politicians, and has suggested to them the expediency of promoting, rather than of checking, its advancement; and the passing of the Reform Bill has rendered it absurd for any administration to attempt to take advantage of its position for the purpose of securing acquiescence in its policy. Besides, in several of the larger towns of Ireland, Presbyterians have greatly increased in wealth, so that, in consequence of the augmentation of congregational stipend, the state now contributes not more than the one-third part of the supplies towards the maintenance of a considerable number of the town ministers.<sup>61</sup>

Whilst British statesmen seem to have been solely prompted

ments, many of the English dissenters of the present day have not only abandoned the principles of their Puritan forefathers, but compromised the cause of nonconformity itself by taking up a false position.

<sup>61</sup> The following is the amount of the annual professional income, *exclusive of Regium Donum*, at present received by a number of the better paid ministers. Several of the items are taken from a "Return for the year ending 31st March 1847, of the congregational incomes of the ministers of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland," issued from Dublin Castle; but some additional particulars are here inserted:—

The minister of Rosemary Street congregation, Belfast,	£400
„ „ Fisherwick Place do., . . . .	350
„ „ York Street, do., . . . .	200
„ „ Townsend Street do., . . . .	175
„ „ Donegall Street do., . . . .	150
„ „ Alfred Street do., . . . .	136, 18s. 4d.

by considerations of state policy, in consenting to the plan for adding so largely to the means of many of the Presbyterian ministers of Ulster, it is probable that Lord Castlereagh was partially influenced, as well by some lingering attachment to the Church of his ancestors, as by a feeling of gratitude and obligation. He was, doubtless, aware that, in 1783, their zeal in the cause of his father had actually deprived the members of the synod of Ulster of an addition to their income of several thousands per annum, and that the support which they had afforded to himself in 1790, when he first appeared as a candidate for parliamentary honours, had enabled him to contend successfully against the opposition of one of the most powerful families in the kingdom. He unquestionably believed that he was dealing with them, not merely as a sagacious politician, but as a considerate friend; and it is remarkable that he proposed, on this occasion, to enlarge the state provision only to that portion of the Presbyterian Church with which his house had been historically associated. The Seceders were not to share in the intended augmentation. Their great patron, the first Marquis of Downshire, had died in the autumn of the year 1793. The second marquis had been cut off in the prime of life in September 1801, but he had previously forfeited the favour of government by his resolute opposition to the union<sup>62</sup> of Great Britain and Ireland. The third

The two ministers of Usher's Quay congregation, Dublin, £471, 9s. 10d.			
The minister of Mary's Abbey do.,	.	.	236, 18s. 4d.
„ „ Adelaide Road do.,	.	.	183, 6s. 8d.
„ „ 3d Derry do.,	.	.	195
„ „ 1st Ballymena do.,	.	.	179
„ „ 2d do. do.,	.	.	135

In many rural districts, the professional income of a minister, exclusive of the bounty of £75, late Irish currency, scarcely exceeds £35. The mass of the rural congregations consist of small farmers paying high rents, and it is often with great difficulty that the sum of £35 is raised. In the appendix the reader will find a return of the amount of yearly stipend paid to each minister of the synod of Ulster and presbytery of Antrim in 1799. This return was furnished by Dr. Black to Lord Castlereagh.

<sup>62</sup> His name was struck out of the list of the privy-council, and he was removed from various other offices of trust, some of which were immediately bestowed on Lord Londonderry. These proceedings, so mortifying to the

marquis was only thirteen years of age at his father's death, so that, at a juncture of so much importance to their interests, the house of Downshire was unable to give any effective assistance to the associate synods.

The consummation of the union, on the 1st of January 1801, was quickly followed by the resignation of the ministry. The leading members of the cabinet were now committed to the support of Roman Catholic emancipation, but when it was found that the king and other influential personages were decidedly hostile to the measure, Mr. Pitt and his colleagues retired from office.<sup>63</sup> This change of government delayed the completion of the arrangements relative to the augmentation of the bounty; and some were beginning to hint that Roman Catholics were not the only parties in Ireland who were to be doomed to disappointment. Had it not been for the exertions of Lord Castlereagh, these forebodings might have been realised. At its annual meeting in the summer of 1801, a letter from his lordship was submitted to the synod of Ulster, stating that, "in obedience to [the late lord-lieutenant's] Lord Cornwallis's commands, he had fully

Downshire family, did not add to the popularity of Lord Castlereagh. In 1805, in consequence of his lordship's appointment to the office of secretary of state for the colonies and the war department, it became necessary for him to vacate his seat in parliament, as member for the county of Down, and again to solicit the suffrages of the freeholders. The Marquis of Downshire was now a minor, and it was at first thought that the new secretary of state would be re-elected without opposition. But an antagonist soon appeared, and the Marchioness of Downshire, who had not forgotten the indignities offered to her house, exerted herself with such effect in behalf of Colonel Meade, the rival candidate, that, on the thirteenth day of the poll, Lord Castlereagh was obliged to retire from the contest. On this occasion the tide of popular feeling ran strongly against his lordship.

<sup>63</sup> Lord Castlereagh says, "Mr. Pitt and friends retired from office because they have for the last two years suffered the Irish Catholics to form a strong expectation that their hopes, in the event of the separate legislature being done away, would be gratified; in contemplation of which the union received their support, and thus made it impossible for the king's ministers, without being guilty of a breach of faith in spirit, if not in terms, to lend themselves to their disappointment." "*Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*," vol. iv. p. 34.

explained to his majesty's ministers of both countries what had already passed on this subject [of the grant]; and in doing so, that he had used his best endeavours to impress their minds in the strongest manner, as well with the general expediency of the measure, *as with the assurances which the synod had received* from their predecessors relative to its speedy accomplishment."<sup>64</sup> Though now no longer in office, Lord Castlereagh had still great influence with government, and his efforts for the accomplishment of a favourite project eventually prevailed. At its annual meeting in 1802, the synod was officially informed that "his majesty's confidential servants had come to a determination to recommend to the king to increase the Regium Donum in the next year, and that a future communication would be made as to the amount, and the regulations which it might be thought desirable to adopt."<sup>65</sup> Almost immediately afterwards, Lord Castlereagh returned to office as President of the Board of Control, and in a few months the plan for the distribution of the bounty was fully matured. At the annual meeting of 1803, it was formally submitted to the synod by order of the lord-lieutenant, and, after some discussion, a motion for its acceptance was put and carried.

At this period, according to the statement in official documents, the congregations of the synod of Ulster and presbytery of Antrim amounted to one hundred and eighty-six. These were divided into three classes, containing sixty-two each.<sup>66</sup> The ministers, as they belonged to the first, second, or third class, were to receive respectively £100, £75, or £50 each, per annum. The agent for the distribution of the bounty was henceforth to be appointed and paid by government, and Dr. Black was nominated

<sup>64</sup> Minutes of Synod for 1801.

<sup>65</sup> Letter from Mr. Secretary Marsden, dated Dublin Castle, 26th June 1802. Minutes of Synod for that year.

<sup>66</sup> This is the statement in the "Plan" laid before the synod by order of the lord-lieutenant in 1804: but, in point of fact, there were only sixty congregations in the first class, as 1st Belfast and Londonderry were "collegiate charges," or had each two ministers, and there were only sixty-one congregations in the third class, as Usher's Quay, Dublin, had also two ministers. No endowment was granted to the congregation of 2d Keady, of which Dr. Dickson was now minister.



to the situation, at a salary of £400 a year. When a minister was elected, he was to notify his appointment, by memorial, to the lord-lieutenant, requesting that the bounty allotted to his congregation might be paid to him; and his memorial was to be accompanied by a certificate, signed by two magistrates, stating that he had taken and subscribed before them the oath of allegiance.<sup>67</sup> To give to each recipient a greater feeling of personal independence, government agreed that "the bounty once granted should in no case be withdrawn from any minister during his continuance in the charge of the congregation, so long as it should please his majesty to continue it to the body at large."<sup>68</sup>

The synod of Ulster submitted to the system of classification with reluctance; and had not his majesty's ministers peremptorily refused to augment the grant on any other terms, the opposition would have been still more resolute and acrimonious. Dr. Black, who seems to have had a considerable share in the contrivance of the plan, as well as in the settlement of its details, became extremely obnoxious to many of his brethren; and, as he was of a sanguine and somewhat irritable temperament, he could ill brook the attacks which were made upon him as often as the matter was under discussion. One of his correspondents complains that his letters at this period "discover much ulceration in a mind of a peculiarly sound and almost noble cast originally,"<sup>69</sup> and it would appear that even his health began to fail under the pressure of anxiety and vexation. But he was sustained by the

<sup>67</sup> The production of such a certificate is not now required.

<sup>68</sup> "Plan," in Minutes of Synod of Ulster for 1803. Mr. Secretary Marsden, in a letter "addressed to the ministers of the synod through the moderator," and dated Dublin Castle, 26th June 1803, adds, that "THIS SYSTEM STUDIOUSLY AVOIDS INTERFERING WITH THE DISCIPLINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH."

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Mr. Alexander Knox to Lord Castlereagh. ("Memoirs and Correspondence," vol. iv. p. 220.) In 1806, a vigorous effort was made to set aside the plan of classification; and a deputation, from which Dr. Black was excluded, was appointed to wait upon the Duke of Bedford, then lord-lieutenant, and humbly to suggest "the propriety, the policy, and the advantage of an equalisation of his majesty's bounty." But government was inflexible.

powerful patronage of Lord Castlereagh; and the well-known fact of his influence with that distinguished statesman no doubt frequently contributed to moderate the violence of assailants. Experience soon demonstrated that classification was not so pregnant with mischief as some of its more ardent foes had imagined; and the increased comforts which the additional bounty secured to the members of the synod, reminded them of the impropriety of acting unkindly towards the man who had exerted himself to so good purpose in procuring its augmentation. Prior to this time, the state provision yielded to each recipient only about £32 a year, and it required to be increased to the extent of from £8000 to £9000 per annum,<sup>70</sup> to enable government to pay the ministers according to the new scale of distribution. This was the largest addition ever made at one time to the endowment of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and it has produced the happiest results. As Presbyterian ministers were originally encouraged by the sovereign to settle in Ulster, and as they at first formed a part of the ecclesiastical establishment, they could not but feel, when excluded from that position, that they were injured and oppressed. The assistance which they received from the state, during the greater part of the last century, was so very insignificant, that it was rather calculated to keep up a feeling of discontent and irritation; for whilst it involved a distinct acknowledgment of their claims upon the British crown, it also suggested to them that they were treated neither with generosity nor justice. The addition of 1784 fell so far short of what had been anticipated, that it was received with little thankfulness; and as the increase of 1792 was given when the country was in a political fever, it was believed by many that the act was dictated solely by the fears of the administration. But in 1803 the spirit of rebellion in Ulster had been crushed, and the grant was so liberal in amount, and was conferred upon terms on the

<sup>70</sup> The exact sum now added was £8641, 2s. The bounty to the synod of Ulster and presbytery of Antrim previously amounted to £6329, 16s. 10d., so that the whole grant for 1803 was £14,970, 18s. 10d., late Irish currency. This does not include what was paid to the Southern Association and the Secession Synods.

whole so advantageous, that it was received with satisfaction and gratitude. Nor has government ever had reason to repent that it has thus recognised the claims of Irish Presbyterians. Ever since the passing of the Act of Union, they have been the steadfast supporters of British connection; and when demagogues have attempted to agitate the question of repeal, the North has protested against their declamation. It has been ascertained that Presbyterian ministers amply repay the state for their endowment, inasmuch as the districts under their pastoral care can be governed without the aid of military; and, whilst the Roman Catholic portions of the country have drawn largely on the public treasury to enable them to meet the demands of pauperism, Ulster has been able to pay a "rate-in-aid" for the liquidation of the debts of other provinces.<sup>71</sup>

At the time when this boon was conferred upon the synod of Ulster, it contained comparatively few members on whom the eye of the enlightened Christian could dwell with much comfort. Its leader, Dr. Black, was strongly suspected of Unitarianism, and the whole tone of his ministrations was undoubtedly anti-evangelical. A large number of his brethren were understood to hold the same theological principles. The members of the presbytery of Antrim regularly attended the meetings of the synod of Ulster, and in its minutes their names appear upon the roll. It was ruled, in 1801, that they and their elders had a right to vote

<sup>71</sup> The statistics of the jails of Ulster supply valuable testimony as to the political advantages of Presbyterianism. In this province, the prisoners stood, as exhibited in the following table, in the interval between the Summer Assizes of 1852 and the Spring Assizes of 1853. When I first entered on this investigation, I intended to confine my attention to the counties of Derry, Antrim, and Down; but, on revising my manuscript a few months afterwards, I thought it better to extend my inquiries to all the counties of Ulster. This circumstance, and the delay experienced in obtaining some of the returns, will account for the difference in dates. I have reason to believe that the following table gives a fair representation of the average proportion of prisoners of different denominations in the jails here mentioned; for though in some instances the proportion of Presbyterian prisoners may, perhaps, be unusually small, I am aware that, in several cases, it is unusually great. I have been assured, by a gentleman officially connected for nearly thirty years

as to the place of meeting. At this period the two parties had so far lost sight of the boundary-line between subscribers and non-subscribers, that, according to a resolution unanimously adopted at the annual meeting of the synod in 1805, the licentiates of the presbytery of Antrim, of the Southern Association, and of the Church of Scotland, were classed together, and all de-

with one of the prisons, that, in the establishment in question, he has *never before* known so large a proportion of Presbyterian prisoners as is here presented :—

Number of Prisoners in county	Episcopalians	Roman Catholics.	Presbyterians.
Antrim Jail, 13th Sept. 1852,	150	125	42
In Armagh Jail, 25th Jan. 1853,	48	64	13
In Cavan Jail, 7th Feb. 1853,	19	108	0
In Derry Jail, 31st Aug. 1852,	24	64	25
In Down Jail, 22d Sept. 1852,	49	102	56
In Donegal Jail, 25th Jan. 1853,	20	111	8
In Fermanagh Jail, 9th Feb. 1853,	51	73	2
In Monaghan Jail, 31st Jan. 1853,	11	110	3
In Tyrone Jail, 1st Feb. 1853,	44	105	6
Total, . . . .	416	862	155

It will be shown in the next chapter that the denominational returns of the population of Ireland in 1834, as given in the First Report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction, were exceedingly partial, and that the Presbyterians were greatly underrated ; but even taking those returns as the basis of calculation, the inhabitants of Ulster in 1852 may be thus divided :—

	Episcopalians.	Roman Catholics.	Presbyterians.
Antrim county,	66,092	99,188	193,223
Armagh do.,	59,377	96,742	40,301
Cavan do.,	25,917	141,611	6,775
Derry do.,	27,342	84,625	79,777
Down do.,	53,937	113,961	149,880
Donegal do.,	38,124	178,898	37,264
Fermanagh do.,	48,430	65,138	2,410
Monaghan do.,	20,717	103,914	18,779
Tyrone do.,	54,659	140,558	56,648
	394,595	1,024,635	585,057

It appears from these figures that there is one Episcopalian in jail for every 918 individuals of the Episcopal population, one Roman Catholic for every 1188 individuals of the Roman Catholic population, and one Presbyterian for every 3771 individuals of the Presbyterian population. I have reason to



clared to be fully entitled to officiate in its pulpits. As might be expected, the state of practical religion was now most deplorable. In many districts, domestic worship, once so general among the Presbyterians of Ulster, had fallen nearly into desuetude, and even ministers themselves had ceased to observe the holy ordinance. But still symptoms of revival were occasionally discernible. At the annual meeting of the General Synod in 1803, some good man called the attention of his brethren to their sins of omission, and it was agreed that "each presbytery be enjoined to recommend to each member under its care to be exemplary in keeping up the worship of God in his family, or where he resides." Whilst the horrors of the Rebellion extinguished the spirit of political agitation throughout Ulster, they awakened not a few to serious reflection, and from that period the number of pious ministers was slowly but steadily increasing. Dr. M'Dowel of Dublin, who had long been one of the leaders of the evangelical party in the General Synod, was now descending into the vale of years, but he saw others coming forward to assert his principles and to occupy his position. Among these, not the

know that a table, stating the *causes* of the confinement of the several prisoners, if such a return could be obtained, would tell still more conclusively in favour of the Presbyterian Church. Thus, of the prisoners in Down jail, as set forth in the above table, eight of the Episcopalians are simply *debtors*, and only forty-one what are properly called *criminals*; only three of the Roman Catholics are debtors, and the remaining ninety-nine criminals; whilst fourteen, or the one-fourth, of the Presbyterians are debtors, and only forty-two, or three-fourths, criminals.

A future note will supply evidence that the statistics of pauperism in Ulster tell as decisively in favour of the Presbyterian Church as the statistics of crime. The Presbyterians of the northern province pay a much larger proportion of the public rates than their numbers indicate, and they are thus taxed most exorbitantly for the support of the criminals and paupers of other denominations. "Why," say the opponents of the Regium Donum, "should other denominations be required to contribute towards the support of Irish Presbyterian ministers?" The Presbyterians may reply, "Why should we be required to support the criminals and paupers of other denominations?" The *interest* of the money recently voted by the British parliament in *one year*, to relieve the Roman Catholic paupers of Ireland, would go far to pay the whole Regium Donum.

least prominent were the Rev. Samuel Hanna of Belfast,<sup>72</sup> and the Rev. Booth Caldwell of Sligo.<sup>73</sup>

The synod of Ulster was not the only denomination in the country which now exhibited some indications of a revival of the spirit of evangelism. The Rebellion had scarcely passed away when an attempt was made by a number of pious ministers and laymen of various religious communities to diffuse the light of a pure Gospel over the North of Ireland. On the 10th of October 1798, an association was formed at Armagh, under the designation of "the Evangelical Society of Ulster," for the purpose of establishing a system of itinerant preaching throughout the towns and villages of the province. A few of the ministers who supported this institution belonged to the Established Church, a few others were members of the synod of Ulster, but the greater number of its clerical friends appear to have been connected with the Associate Synods. The Rev. George Hamilton, the minister of the secession congregation of Armagh, was appointed secretary, and Mr. Samuel Carson, brother of Mr. Alexander Carson, shortly to be ordained to the pastoral charge of the Presbyterian congregation of Tobermore, was elected treasurer. The association professed to maintain a strict neutrality in regard to the advancement of denominational interests, and applied to the London Missionary Society for two itinerant preachers, who were to engage to commence their labours early in the ensuing summer.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Dr. Hanna was born at Kellswater, near Ballymena, about the year 1771. In 1795, he was ordained to the pastoral charge of the congregation of Drumbo, where he remained until 1799, when he was installed as minister of Rosemary Street, Belfast, on the 11th of December of that year. He died in April 1852, in the eighty-second year of his age.

<sup>73</sup> Mr. Caldwell was born near Omagh, and was brought up under the care of a pious grandfather. Towards the end of the year 1797, he was ordained minister of Sligo, where he remained till his death in 1810. He was emphatically a man of prayer, and his memory is still savoury in the place where he ministered. A biographical notice of him, by his friend the Rev. John Johnston, now of Tullylish, appeared in successive numbers of the "Dublin Christian Instructor" for 1823.

<sup>74</sup> "Introductory Memorial," prefixed to Hamilton's "Sermon delivered in the new meeting-house in Armagh, at the formation of the Evangelical So-

The Evangelical Society of Ulster was conceived in an excellent spirit, and was, no doubt, the means of extensive usefulness, but its peculiar organisation was the offspring of necessity ; and, had the existing churches been in a more efficient and healthful condition, its establishment would have been unnecessary. From its very commencement, the more rigid Seceders regarded it with jealousy, and were much offended with those associate ministers by whom it was patronised. In 1799, the attention of both their synods was directed to it, and it was pronounced to be "constituted on principles not consistent with the Secession Testimony."<sup>75</sup> This condemnation of an institution which they had been at such pains to form and cherish, seems to have shaken the attachment of some of the associate ministers to the cause of the secession, and their estrangement was increased by their intercourse with the independent preachers who were sent over from England to itinerate as the agents of the society. Several of the malcontents eventually withdrew from the Secession Church, and became the pastors of Independent congregations.<sup>76</sup>

ciety of Ulster, on Wednesday, 10th of October 1798," p. 11.) Appended to this sermon is a list of "subscribers' names," the highest contributor being John Jackson, Esq., Crieve, Ballibay, an elder of the Presbyterian Church, who gave an annual donation of five guineas. (For a notice of this gentleman, see the Rev. A. Breakey's "Discourse occasioned by the death of S. H. Rowan, Esq.," p. 25.) Mr. Jackson was the grandfather of the Rev. William Johnston, minister of Townsend Street Presbyterian Church, Belfast.

\* <sup>75</sup> MS. Minutes of Antiburgher Synod for 1799. The Burgher Synod, at the same time, passed an overture condemning it in a somewhat less decided manner.

<sup>76</sup> In the MS. Minutes of the Burgher Synod for 1802, it is reported that the Rev. George Hamilton "had given in his declinature." Mr. Hamilton became now the pastor of an Independent Church at Armagh ; and as a large portion of his former congregation still adhered to him, the secession cause, for several years afterwards, was virtually extinct in that city. About the same time, the Rev. John Gibson, the Seceding minister of Richhill, and a large portion of his congregation, became Independents. The Seceding congregation of Sligo also merged into an Independent Church. For a time the Rev. John Lowry of Clennanees seemed inclined to congregationalism, and departed so far from secession usages as to introduce the use of hymns in public worship ; but the matter was taken up by the Burgher Synod, and he was induced to return to ecclesiastical conformity.

The spread of congregational principles about this period deprived the synod of Ulster of a minister, who, in point of intellectual vigour, far exceeded almost all his contemporaries. The Rev. Alexander Carson was ordained to the charge of the Presbyterian congregation of Tobermore, in the county of Derry, on the 11th of December 1798. Mr. Carson was early known as a pastor of ardent piety and high scholarship, as well as of original genius; but there were very few, if any, of his co-presbyters with whom he could hold refreshing spiritual fellowship. His visits to his relatives at Armagh now brought him into contact with some zealous and worthy advocates of Independency; and, becoming dissatisfied with the whole fabric of Presbyterianism, he adopted the system of the Baptists, and withdrew, in May 1805, from the synod of Ulster. His secession originated a dispute relative to the property of the meeting-house, and led to a tedious and expensive lawsuit, in which the synod was eventually successful. But though separated from the Presbyterian Church, Mr. Carson did not cease to be a preacher of the everlasting Gospel, and the serious and well-taught congregation<sup>77</sup> he gathered around him at Tobermore was an honourable testimony to the fruitfulness of his ministry. As an author, he offends occasionally by his dogmatism, but his style is remarkably clear and nervous. His works in defence of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures have done good service to the cause of catholic Christianity; and no one who loves the truth will be disposed to speak irreverently of the minister who wrote "The Knowledge of Jesus the most Excellent of the Sciences."

When Mr. Carson left the synod of Ulster, it much required

<sup>77</sup> It is a singular fact, that a large proportion of the Scripture-readers belonging to the Dublin City Mission were at one period drawn from the congregation of Dr. Carson of Tobermore. He died in 1844, at the age of sixty-seven. Prior to his death, he rejoiced in the revival of religion which had taken place in the Irish Presbyterian Church, and was the intimate friend of several of its ministers. He seems to have withdrawn from the synod somewhat earlier than the date mentioned in the text; but, probably, in the hope that he would retrace his steps, the presbytery of Tyrone, with which he was connected, took no notice of his proceedings until May 1805.



the presence of an ecclesiastical reformer, and it could ill afford to lose such an able and intrepid theologian. The Secession Church was in a better condition, and the withdrawal of two or three of its ministers did not greatly affect its prosperity. During the seventeen years intervening between 1792 and 1809, it nearly doubled the number of its pastors. The dissensions in the synod of Ulster relative to classification materially contributed to this increase. The public mind had been intensely excited by the discussions respecting the distribution of the bounty; and when the clerical opponents of the government scheme deemed it prudent to acquiesce in the arrangement, many of their hearers retired in disgust from their communion, and sought the pastoral instruction of associate ministers. When invited to preach within the bounds of a discontented congregation, the members of the seceding synods were not slow to obey the call; and, on such occasions, their allusions to the great topic of the day were not calculated to add to the popularity of classification. But a time was coming when they were themselves to experience the caprice of public favour. Ever since the increase of the grant to the General Synod they had felt themselves overlooked, and they had repeatedly plied the government with applications for an augmentation. In the year 1809, their importunity prevailed. But when the terms of the addition were disclosed, it was discovered that they involved the hated principle which had already created such embittered feeling. The ministers were to be divided into three classes, and they were to be paid according to a lower scale than the members of the synod of Ulster, for those who were in the first class were to receive only £70 per annum, those in the second £50, and those in the third £40.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>78</sup> In 1809, there were 91 secession ministers in Ireland. Of these, 31 were in the first class, 30 in the second, and 30 in the third. At this time the Burgher ministers were much more numerous than the Antiburghers, and generally better endowed, as will appear from the following statement:—

Burgher ministers in the 1st class 27, Antiburghers in 1st class 4

Do. in 2d do. 24, do. in 2d do. 6

Do. in 3d do. 16, do. in 3d do. 14

The addition now made to the secession bounty amounted to £3741, and the

The announcement of this scheme was the signal for an outburst of indignation. The Irish Secession Church was moved throughout all its borders; congregational meetings were convened, resolutions were adopted, and the system of a classified bounty was vehemently decried. The Burghers, who had been particularly favoured in the new arrangement, agreed, after considerable discussion, to remonstrate with government, and to seek equalisation; the Antiburghers proceeded farther, and, at two successive synods,<sup>79</sup> solemnly declared that the grant, as at present offered, "could not be accepted." It so happened that the greater number of their congregations had been placed in the lowest class of bounty, and it was suspected that this fact had some influence in fomenting their excitement; but it is unsafe to make professions of self-denial when the plain precepts of the Gospel necessarily require no sacrifice. The very men who had so often and so censoriously assailed the synod of Ulster for submitting to classification, and who had themselves twice publicly signified their determination to reject the grant if clogged with this condition, were soon found compromising their consistency, and appropriating the condemned endowment. The plea, that "their poverty and not their will consented," was rather an awkward apology for ministers who had recently avowed, that, by accepting the provision, they would be acting "contrary to their consciences and contrary to their principles."

In this little synod of twenty-four ministers, there was, however, one individual who had the constancy to endure the pains of pecuniary martyrdom. The Rev. James Bryce of Killeug, or Aghadoey, had for several years patiently received the Regium

whole of the state provision for the associate ministers, in 1809, was £5168, late Irish currency. Several years prior to this period, the associate ministers had taken steps for establishing a Widows' Fund, and, in 1813, they adopted a series of rules and regulations for its management. This fund at present has an accumulated capital of upwards of £24,000, and pays to the widow of each contributor an annuity of £25. In the case of orphans, this annuity is continued for twelve years from the death of the father.

<sup>79</sup> The first of these meetings was held at Belfast, in July 1809, and the second at Ahoghill, in October of the same year. At the meeting in Ahoghill, only eleven ministers were present.

Donum as originally distributed, but to partake of it upon the terms of the new arrangement, and in the degradation of the lowest class, as now proposed, was an indignity which he could not tolerate. When all the other members of his synod had yielded, he still remained firm; and as he occasionally preached in various districts where discontent prevailed, he contributed to keep alive divisions in the congregations of his brethren. His alleged irregularities, as a disturber of the ecclesiastical peace, were soon brought under the notice of the Church, and at a meeting of the General Associate Synod, held at Edinburgh in May 1811, he was suspended from his office. Sustained by the unanimous support of his own congregation, Mr. Bryce disregarded this ecclesiastical censure, and became the founder of a small sect in the North of Ireland, which still maintains a lingering existence.<sup>80</sup>

The discussions which agitated the synod of Ulster and the secession synods, on the subject of the Regium Donum, and the melancholy inconsistency which not a few of the controversialists displayed, served to swell the membership of another portion of the Irish Presbyterian Church, which had now for about fifty years enjoyed the benefits of a stated ministry. The adherents of the Reformed Presbytery, or Covenanters, repudiated a state provision; and whilst the bounty debates continued, they had

<sup>80</sup> In 1816, Mr. Bryce published "A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Associate Antiburgher Synods in Ireland and Scotland in the Affair of the Royal Bounty." In this pamphlet the history of the controversy is pretty fully detailed. For upwards of five years Mr. Bryce remained alone, and preached, as often as circumstances would permit, to seven small congregations, made up of individuals whom the dispute relative to the bounty had alienated from their former ministers. At length, in August 1816, and without any ministerial assistant, he ordained Mr. Hugh M'Intyre, now Dr. M'Intyre, to the pastoral charge of the congregation of Craigmore. There are at present, in what is called "the Associate Presbytery of Ireland," six or seven ministers, presiding over as many small and uninfluential congregations. Whatever may be thought of the wisdom of his proceedings, Mr. Bryce is unquestionably entitled to credit for decision and consistency; and he has lived to see his sons occupying honourable positions in society. The Rev. Dr. Bryce of the Belfast Academy, James Bryce, Esq., of the High School of Glasgow, and Archibald Bryce, Esq., of the High School of Edinburgh, have long been distinguished for their literary attainments.

an excellent opportunity for the dissemination of their principles. At the commencement of the century, they could reckon only nine or ten ministers; but they soon increased so considerably, that they had four presbyteries, the eastern, the western, the northern, and the southern. The first meeting of "The Reformed Presbyterian Synod of Ireland" took place at Cullybackey, near Ballymena, on the 1st of May 1811.

To attribute the increase of the Reformed Presbyterians, at this period, entirely to the imprudence of the pastors of other sections of the Presbyterian Church during the *Regium Donum* controversy, would, however, be an egregious error. The condemnation of the bounty by the Covenanters tended in various quarters to promote their popularity; but the fidelity with which their ministers preached the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel was unquestionably the grand secret of their progress. And the alacrity with which these doctrines were now received supplied decisive evidence of an improvement in the spirit of the age. Orthodox candidates were generally preferred when vacancies occurred in the congregations of the synod of Ulster.<sup>81</sup> This increased attachment to evangelical truth was also marked by the increased diffusion of the Scriptures. At the annual meeting of the General Synod in 1807, several ministers were appointed to devise means for supplying Bibles on easy terms to the humbler classes of Presbyterians; and, in 1809, the committee reported that "their success had exceeded their expectations," and that they had received remittances for Bibles and Testaments to the amount of £1102, 8s. 3d.<sup>82</sup> For some time afterwards, they continued their

<sup>81</sup> On this point, the testimony of Dr. Cooke, before the Commissioners of Education Inquiry in 1825, is very remarkable. Dr. Cooke says—"I was ordained in 1808; I believe I succeeded an Arian; another friend was ordained in 1808, and he succeeded an Arian, or one very near to it; another friend succeeded, in like manner, a very decided Arian; and another friend another Arian; until in one whole district, which was twenty years ago entirely Arian, I do not know of one single minister you could suspect of Arianism except one." "Fourth Report," p. 148.

<sup>82</sup> Minutes of Synod of Ulster for 1809. On this occasion Mr. Hanna (afterwards Dr. Hanna), and Mr. Munfod, his elder, received the thanks of the synod "for their unwearied and highly useful exertions in this business."



exertions under the most encouraging circumstances; and, in 1811, they had the satisfaction of announcing, that "the formation of different branches of the Hibernian Bible Society in the province had, in a great degree, superseded the necessity of their labours."<sup>83</sup> The proceedings connected with a case of discipline, which now occupied a considerable share of public attention, indicated also the growth of a reforming party in the synod of Ulster. In 1809, the minister of Ballee, in the county of Down, had been permitted to resign the charge of his congregation, and had soon afterwards been suspended for immoral conduct by the presbytery of Bangor. He appealed against this decision to the synod which met in the summer of 1810, and, at the same time, sought to be restored to the pastoral care. During the hearing of the appeal, he declared himself a Unitarian; but notwithstanding this avowal, and other disclosures not very creditable to his ministerial character, it was decided that the congregation should be polled, and that he should be reinstated in the charge, if supported by a synodical majority of suffrages. Five members had the firmness to require their names to be recorded as dissenting from this finding; and, at the meeting of synod in the following year, a protest, in which they were joined by twelve other ministers, was presented to the court, and ordered to be inserted in the minutes. In this document, which gives distant notice of the approach of the Arian controversy, the subscribers bear a clear and emphatic testimony in behalf of one of the great truths of revelation. "We protest," say they, "against the proceedings of this reverend synod in this affair, because" this minister "denied the doctrine of the Trinity, which we consider a fundamental article of the Christian faith, the denial of which is utterly subversive of Christianity."<sup>84</sup>

The sums received from some congregations were very large. Thus Ballykelly congregation remitted £87, 2s. 6d.; Newtownards congregation, £82, 4s. 4d.; and Ballibay congregation, £48, 17s. 6d. In the following year, it is reported that Ballymoney congregation had remitted £72, 5s. 8d.; Finvoy congregation, £59, 7s. 2½d.; and Broughshane congregation, £48, 2s. 2d.

<sup>83</sup> Minutes of Synod of Ulster for 1811.

<sup>84</sup> The names of the seventeen protesters are James Elder, James Brown,

The minutes of the meeting at which this protest was handed in contain the first intimation of the appearance of a missionary spirit in the synod of Ulster. "Mr. Hanna [of Belfast] gave notice that he will move the synod next year to afford some support to the society lately formed in London for promoting the conversion of the Jews." When the appointed time arrived, this motion was not pressed, but the synod was induced to recommend the claims of another missionary institution. The Rev. Dr. Waugh<sup>85</sup> appeared at the annual meeting of 1812, as a deputy from the London Missionary Society, and sought permission to address the assembled ministers and elders. Some of the leading members of the court were strongly opposed to the application, and did not scruple openly to denounce the idea of missions to the heathen as absurd and utopian; and had not Mr. Hanna, Mr. Henry of Connor,<sup>86</sup> and others, boldly and energetically remonstrated, the venerable representative of an institution which has been so singularly blessed would have been refused a hearing. But Dr. Waugh was a master in Israel, and when at

Richard Dill, Samuel Dill, John Hall, Solomon Brown, Charles Kennedy, William Wright, Thomas Greer, William D. H. M'Ewen, Richard Dill, jun., James Marshal, James Gowdy, James Horner, Samuel Hanna, John Thomson, and Joseph Harrison. One of these protesters, the Rev. W. D. H. M'Ewen, afterwards avowed Unitarianism. Mr. M'Ewen was at this time minister of the congregation of Usher's Quay, Dublin. In 1813 he removed to Killileagh, and in 1817 to Belfast, where he was minister of the 2d congregation.

<sup>85</sup> Dr. Waugh was minister of the Scottish Secession Church, Wells Street, London, and was himself one of the honoured founders of the London Missionary Society. He died in December 1827, aged seventy-one years. He possessed an extraordinary gift of prayer, and in London, at public meetings of special solemnity, he was usually called upon to conduct the devotional exercises. The late Rev. Richard Cecil, one of the most eminent Episcopal ministers of his day, is known to have acknowledged, in his last illness, that he derived more benefit from the prayers of Dr. Waugh than from those of any other of his numerous and excellent clerical friends. "Life of Dr. Waugh," pp. 126, 127, 145.

<sup>86</sup> The Rev. Henry Henry was ordained minister of Garvagh in May 1788, but removed to Connor in the month of December following. He died in November 1840. He was one of the most exemplary ministers of the synod of Ulster.

length permitted to proceed, he nobly improved the opportunity. Some ministers who yet survive still retain a vivid recollection of the impression produced by his spirit-stirring appeal. "He had not spoken half an hour when there was not a dry eye to be seen among all his auditors; and several of the individuals who had reflected on him in severe terms were the most deeply affected. From that day, so far as the synod was concerned, liberty was granted that every pulpit might be opened to the deputation of the London Missionary Society."<sup>87</sup>

Whilst the early part of the present century was not without various symptoms of spiritual improvement, it was also strongly marked by a desire for the extension of education. At the annual meeting of the synod of Ulster in 1806, a deputation appointed to wait upon the Duke of Bedford, then lord-lieutenant, was instructed to seek an opportunity of "conferring with his grace on the great necessity and utility of extending the benefits of education to the children of the poor."<sup>88</sup> It does not appear that this particular application produced any practical result; but it is well known that, about this period, seminaries of elementary instruction were improved and multiplied. Soon afterwards, a number of the public-spirited inhabitants of the prosperous town of Belfast projected the erection of an educational institute of a higher order than any hitherto established in the province of Ulster. At the annual meeting of the General Synod in 1809, a letter, announcing their intentions, was received from "the Managers of the Belfast Academical Institution." The synod received the communication with satisfaction, and appointed a committee to prepare a suitable reply; but as several years passed away before the necessary buildings were completed, the managers did not, meanwhile, feel called upon to state the precise terms on which they sought the patronage of the Irish Presbyterian Church. At

<sup>87</sup> "Life of Dr. Waugh," p. 184, third edition. On this occasion, Dr. Waugh was cordially welcomed by his brethren the Seceders, and invited to preach in their pulpits, but ill health prevented him from accepting these invitations.

<sup>88</sup> Minutes of Synod for 1806. The London Hibernian Society was established in 1806, and the Sunday-School Society for Ireland in 1809.

length, in August 1813, at a conference with a committee nominated for the purpose, the managers described the means by which, as they conceived, the synod could best promote the interests of the institution. This conference terminated in a manner highly gratifying to both parties; and as it appeared that the new seminary would furnish a collegiate education to candidates for the ministry, the committee, in their report to the synod of the following year, recommended that, "so soon as adequate professors should be appointed," it should pay "the same respect to the certificates of the Belfast Academical Institution as to the certificates of foreign universities." They also recommended to the serious consideration of the synod the expediency of establishing, in connection with the new institute, a professorship of divinity and ecclesiastical history. The court did not think it prudent to accede, without farther inquiry, to recommendations relating to matters of such deep importance; but, at the following meeting of synod in 1815, the suggestions of the committee were unanimously adopted.

The managers of the Belfast Institution had solicited the patronage of the associate ministers, as well as of the members of the synod of Ulster, and from both the seceding bodies they met with the most cordial encouragement. The Rev. John Rogers of Cahans, professor of divinity, died on the 24th of August 1814, and no arrangements were made for the teaching of the class during the ensuing session; but, at the annual meeting of the Burgher Synod in 1815, the Rev. Samuel Edgar<sup>89</sup> of Bally-

<sup>89</sup> Mr. Edgar was ordained to the pastoral charge of the Seceding congregation of Ballynahinch towards the end of the year 1793. He was long a most active and useful minister of the Secession Church, and his preaching was particularly distinguished by its simplicity and unction. For some time he conducted, at Ballynahinch, an academy, which attained considerable celebrity, and in which Mr. James Thomson, afterwards the eminent professor of mathematics in the University of Glasgow, was an assistant. The clerkship of the Burgher Synod and the professorship of divinity were vacant at the same time, and Mr. Edgar stood so high in the estimation of his brethren that he obtained both appointments. He was mainly instrumental in effecting the union between the Burghers and Antiburghers. In 1820, he received the degree of D.D. from Union College in the United States. He



nahinch was elected his successor. At the following November, Mr. Edgar, acting under the direction of his brethren, delivered his lectures in the Academical Institution. Meanwhile government had endowed the seminary with a grant of £1500 per annum, and a staff of professors had been appointed to teach various branches of literature and science. The classes were in full operation during the session 1815-16, and the establishment rapidly advanced in popular favour.

The opening of the Belfast Academical Institution forms a new epoch in the educational history of the North of Ireland. The seminary fostered a literary taste in the inhabitants of the capital of Ulster, and placed various branches of knowledge within the reach of not a few to whom they would otherwise have remained almost inaccessible. But, throughout the whole period of its collegiate existence,<sup>90</sup> it was in a struggling condition. At the close of its very first collegiate session, it encountered the determined hostility of the most influential minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Dr. Black had been prevented by ill health from being present at the annual meeting of the General Synod in 1815, but he had marked the progress of the Belfast Institution with an eye of jealousy, and the sanction which it had received from his brethren, on the occasion of his absence, had inspired him with anxiety. The political sentiments of certain parties who had a share in the management of the new establishment were exceedingly distasteful to him, and he was haunted with the idea that it would exercise a baneful influence over the minds of the students in attendance. Recent proceedings, in which some of its teachers and managers were implicated,

died on the 17th October 1826, in the sixtieth year of his age, and thirty-third of his ministry.

<sup>90</sup> For the information of the general reader, it may here be necessary to state, that in 1849 its collegiate department was superseded by the Queen's College, Belfast, an institute which promises to confer immense advantages upon the province of Ulster. At the Queen's College, the greater number of the students under the care of the Irish General Assembly receive their literary and philosophical education. The Presbyterian College, Belfast, is simply a theological seminary.

had served to deepen his prejudices. At a public dinner, on the 16th of March 1816, where these parties were present, several political toasts of an objectionable character were given, and, in consequence, the chancellor of the Irish exchequer had notified to the secretary of the institution that the usual grant would be omitted in the public estimates. It was thus deprived of that parliamentary sanction which it had hitherto enjoyed, and it laboured under the additional disadvantage, that it could not confer those academic honours which the more ancient seats of learning were authorised to bestow. Dr. Black, therefore, argued that it would detract from the respectability of the Irish Presbyterian Church were it to recognise candidates for the ministry trained up at such an institute. At the annual meeting of 1816, he made a vigorous effort to induce the synod to rescind the resolutions it had adopted the preceding year; but though he stated fully his objections, in a speech which occupied an hour and a half in the delivery, his reasoning made no impression. The synod proceeded to make arrangements for collecting funds to endow a chair of divinity and Church history,<sup>91</sup> and agreed to meet at Cookstown, on the first Tuesday of November, to elect a professor. When it assembled for this purpose at the appointed time, it was discovered that comparatively little progress had yet been made in the raising of funds; and that, without the prospect of an adequate maintenance, parties competent to discharge the duties of the situation were generally unwilling to allow themselves to be put in nomination as candidates. Another difficulty of an equally grave character now presented itself. A letter to the moderator from the boards of the Belfast Institution was communicated to the synod, stating that, at a conference between a deputation from their body and

<sup>91</sup> Immediately afterwards, a committee appointed for the purpose published an "Address to the People under the care of the General Synod of Ulster," with a view to obtain funds for endowing the theological chair. They state in this appeal that they could not expect to obtain a suitable professor "for a smaller salary than £250 or £300 per annum." The Rev. John Thomson of Carnmoney, who was chairman of this committee, took a deep interest in the establishment of the Academical Institution.

Lord Castlereagh, "his lordship deprecated the measure of connecting the synod of Ulster with the institution, as proposed at the present time; complained that the synod did not act with becoming respect to his majesty's government, in withholding from them their intention of appointing a professor of divinity to lecture in the institution, and in resolving to accept of certificates from a committee of their own body in lieu of a degree of master of arts from a regular college; and intimated that, in his opinion, such a measure, if adopted, would be deemed an act of hostility by his majesty's government." It was added, that "his lordship requested it to be understood that these sentiments were his, as an individual, without any reference whatever to those of his majesty's government." The boards concluded their communication by stating that "it would be matter of extreme regret to them should any circumstance arise to lessen the confidence and harmony which ought always to exist between his majesty's government and the synod of Ulster." Under all these discouragements, the synod deemed it prudent to defer the appointment till its annual meeting in the following year, but exhorted "all its members to continue, in the meantime, their exertions to raise the sum requisite" for endowing the professorship.<sup>92</sup>

With a view to conciliate Lord Castlereagh, the synod appointed a deputation to wait on that nobleman, and to explain the principles which had guided it in forming a connection with the Belfast Academical Institution." The result of this interview was not, however, satisfactory, as his lordship distinctly told the deputies that he considered the recent permission given to students to attend the Belfast seminary "a breach of the contract between the synod and the government." When reminded that, according to the arrangements made in 1803, at the time of the augmentation of the bounty, the state was pledged not to interfere with the synod's discipline,<sup>93</sup> his lordship asked if the

<sup>92</sup> At this meeting, the Rev. William Porter of Newtownlimavady was elected clerk of the synod, in the room of the Rev. Thomas Cuming, lately deceased. It was ruled that the members of the presbytery of Antrim had a right to vote in the election.

<sup>93</sup> See note 68 of this chapter.

deputies regarded the question of collegiate education as an affair of discipline, and when an affirmative answer was returned, he replied that he could not accede to that interpretation. Though he professed to speak merely as an individual, the deputation could not but recollect that he was a most influential minister of the crown,<sup>94</sup> and that his private views would most probably be adopted by the cabinet of Great Britain. The deputies retired apparently without having made any impression upon the mind of his lordship; and as soon as it was understood that they had failed in the object of their mission, the tongue of rumour was most active, and it was currently reported that the *Regium Donum* would be withdrawn should the Presbyterian Church persist in preserving its connection with the Belfast Institution. Many confidently expected that the synod of Ulster would succumb; and those who had predicted the worst consequences from the acceptance of the classified bounty, now awaited with impatience the fulfilment of all their melancholy prophecies. They alleged that Presbyterian ministers must submit to the will and pleasure of their civil rulers, as, by consenting to receive the money of the state, they had made merchandise of their ecclesiastical freedom.

In 1817, the General Synod held its annual meeting in Belfast; and when the deputation to Lord Castlereagh handed in their report, the spacious meeting-house of Rosemary Street<sup>95</sup> was crowded in every part by a deeply interested audience. The withdrawal of the parliamentary grant from the Academical Institution had created a great sensation, and Dr. Black, who was understood to be in the confidence of Lord Castlereagh, boldly declared that a continued connection with the seminary might involve consequences exceedingly embarrassing to the synod itself. He did not, indeed, go so far as to affirm that the safety of the bounty was in immediate peril, but he asserted, that "if the synod transferred the education of candidates for the ministry from a

<sup>94</sup> His lordship was now secretary of state for foreign affairs.

<sup>95</sup> The present splendid edifice was erected in 1831, at an expense of about £10,000, but the original building, in which the synod met on this occasion, was capable of accommodating a very large congregation.



regular college to a private academy, it might become a consideration with the government whether it would hereafter grant the *Regium Donum* to young men so educated." There was a prevailing impression throughout the house that a blow was aimed at the independence of the Church, and that the synod had reached a most important crisis in its history; but whilst the senior members paused and hesitated, one of the young ministers had the moral courage to come forward and take the lead in repelling the aggression. The Rev. James Carlile<sup>96</sup> of Mary's Abbey, Dublin, had been listening to the report of the deputies with indignation, and when all its details were fully submitted to the synod, he advanced towards the pulpit, and delivered a speech as remarkable for its intrepidity as its eloquence. "It is surely unnecessary," said he, "to take up the time of the synod in demonstrating that the education of our students is strictly a matter of internal arrangement. Nothing is more nearly connected with the spiritual interests of our people. There are, moderator, some proposals which may be made to individuals, or to public bodies, on which it is infamous even to deliberate. Such seems to me to be the nature of the proposal made to us at our late meeting in Cookstown, when, by a verbal message from an individual styling himself Lord Castlereagh, we were informed that government may regard our electing a professor for educating our students in theology as an act of hostility, and we were required to desist from our purpose. Who or what is this Lord Castlereagh, that he should send such a message to the synod of Ulster? Is he a minister of the body? Is he an elder? What right has he to obtrude himself on our deliberations? I revere the government of my country. I pay it a willing obedience in matters

<sup>96</sup> Mr. Carlile was ordained to the pastoral charge of the Mary's Abbey congregation on the 14th of May 1813. He was a licentiate of the Established Church of Scotland. In a testimonial, presented to the managers and visitors of the Belfast Academical Institution in 1829, Professor Symington of Paisley says of him—"Mr. Carlile belongs to a family of the first respectability in this town, where his father has long sustained a high reputation as a member and office-bearer in the Church, a magistrate, and a liberal patron of all benevolent and Christian institutions. He received a finished education, under every advantage."

civil. I am no cavilling politician. But I protest against government dictating an opinion as to the measures we should adopt for the interests of religion. As long as I can raise my voice, I will raise it against the principle of admitting civil governors, as such, to be heard in our deliberations. Where now is the high spirit of independence, the stern integrity of our ancestors, which would have made them walk steadily to the stake or to the gibbet before they would have suffered any civil magistrate to dictate to them where their students should be educated? Let us tell our people that we will never permit his majesty's bounty to operate as a bribe to induce us to desert what we believe to be their spiritual welfare. We are this day put on our trial for our integrity—the eyes of Ulster are upon us—the eyes of the kingdom will soon be upon us—the eyes of God are observing our motions and our purposes—the eyes of Him, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, are watching our determinations. This day's decision will tell whether we deserve to rank as an independent, upright, conscientious body, with no other end in view than the glory of God and the welfare of his Church, or whether we deserve that Lord Castlereagh should drive his chariot into the midst of us, and tread us down as the offal of the streets.”<sup>97</sup>

This speech, worthy of the days of Knox and Melville, was heard with intense satisfaction by an overflowing audience. Several succeeding speakers attempted to do away with the impression it produced, and to set aside the motion with which it concluded, but all their efforts were utterly futile. The bold address of the young pastor had thrilled through Presbyterian hearts, awakening the martyr spirit of the olden time, and his auditors now spurned the monotony of trimming and temporising. The resolution, that “the regulations for the education of young men intended for the ministry are strictly a matter of discipline,” was carried by an overwhelming majority.

<sup>97</sup> The speech may be found pretty fully reported in the *Belfast Newsletter* of the 1st of July 1817. The general interest taken in the discussions relative to the Belfast Institution led to the publication of reports of the synodical proceedings. Prior to the year 1815, the newspapers rarely take any notice of them.

It was now apparent to all that the synod had taken up a position from which it would not recede, and that it would be useless to throw any farther obstruction in the way of the election of a theological professor. The Rev. Samuel Hanna of Belfast was accordingly chosen unanimously to fill the chair of divinity and Church history. The determination of the place where he should deliver his lectures created some discussion. It was moved that he should assemble his students in his own meeting-house, but it was finally decided that he should lecture in the Academic Institution.

The election of Mr. Hanna, as professor of theology, demonstrates the ascendancy of the evangelical party in the largest section of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Thirty years before, the synod of Ulster could not have been induced to advance such a man to such a position. Mr. Hanna was an avowed Calvinist, he was largely imbued with an evangelical spirit, and he had been long known in the courts of the Church as the assertor of orthodox principles. The chair of theology had not the attraction of a considerable endowment;<sup>98</sup> but, had the anti-evangelical party in the synod entertained an idea that they could have commanded a majority of suffrages, they could easily have found a rival candidate in the town or neighbourhood of Belfast. Their acquiescence in the appointment of a minister with whom they had no sympathy loudly proclaimed their numerical weakness.

Whilst this election of a professor of divinity cemented the union between the General Synod and the Belfast Institution, it also greatly promoted the progress of home education. From this period the majority of the Irish students ceased to frequent the

<sup>98</sup> Dr. Hanna was minister of the large congregation of Rosemary Street as well as professor. He states, in his evidence before the Commissioners of Education Inquiry in 1825, that, during the first two years, he only received £36 as professor. ("Fourth Report," p. 60.) But, soon afterwards, the emoluments became much more considerable. It is scarcely necessary to add, that no attempt was ever made to execute any of the threats relative to the withdrawal of *Regium Donum* from ministers educated at the Belfast Institution.

Scottish universities. Trained up in Belfast under the eye of relatives or acquaintances who took an interest in their welfare, they were preserved from many temptations to which they were exposed in a land of strangers; and the merits of each individual, whatever they might be, were ascertained and appreciated. At this period, an attendance on a class of divinity for six months was all that was required, but the synod of 1817 doubled the length of the theological curriculum. Even in the time thus allotted, it was impossible for a single professor to overtake the various subjects he was expected to expound, but the addition of another session to the course was an arrangement dictated by the soundest wisdom.<sup>99</sup>

Dr. Black had long acted the most prominent part in the meetings of the General Synod, and, as an ecclesiastical chief, he had displayed great tact, sagacity, and eloquence. But of late his influence had been visibly declining. His political principles were offensive to many who cherished his religious creed, and his religious creed was gradually becoming more and more unpopular. In some of the recent debates on the subject of the Belfast Institution, he had been left almost alone. The annual meeting of 1817 was the last synod he attended, as he died in the month of December following.<sup>100</sup> For a considerable time his place remained unoccupied, as several years passed away before any other minister was recognised as the leader of the synod of Ulster.

<sup>99</sup> At present, all the students under the care of the Irish General Assembly are required to devote three sessions of six months each exclusively to the study of theology in its various branches.

<sup>100</sup> For many months his health had been declining, and at length his mind fairly lost its balance. On the 4th of December 1817, in a fit of insanity, he threw himself from the bridge of Derry, and was drowned. He died in the sixty-sixth year of his age.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

A.D. 1818-1841.

*Union of the Burgher and Antiburgher Synods—Missionary operations of the Secession Synod and of the Synod of Ulster—Intercourse of Synod of Munster, Presbytery of Antrim, and Synod of Ulster—Preparation and publication of a Code of Discipline by Synod of Ulster—Its provisions—Rev. H. Cooke removes from Donegore to Killileagh—Captain Rowan one of his elders—Mission of Mr. Smithurst, a Unitarian, from England—Mr. Cooke complains of the election of Mr. Bruce as Professor of Greek in the Belfast Institution—Dr. Bruce publishes his Sermons, and Mr. Paul his “Refutation of Arianism”—Mr. Cooke chosen Moderator of the General Synod—His evidence before the Commissioners of Education Inquiry—Evidence of Rev. W. Porter—Synod of Strabane, and its declaration of belief in the doctrine of the Trinity—Speech of Rev. H. Montgomery—Review of it by Mr. Paul—Synod of Cookstown adopts resolutions against Arianism, and establishes a Theological Examination Committee—Speech of Rev. R. Stewart—Election of Mr. Ferrie as Professor of Moral Philosophy in Belfast Institution—Synod of Lurgan, and attack of Mr. Montgomery on Mr. Cooke—The Unitarians resolve to withdraw from the Synod, and assume the designation of Remonstrants—Review of the Arian controversy—Popularity of Dr. Cooke—Happy results of the Unitarian Secession—The Rev. J. S. Reid elected Clerk of the Synod of Ulster—Establishment of Fisherwick Place congregation, Belfast, and labours of Rev. James Morgan—Controversy respecting the National System of Education—Adoption of unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession—Renewal of intercourse with the Established Church of Scotland—Equalisation of the Regium Donum—Efforts to promote a union between the Secession Synod and the Synod of Ulster—Consummation of the union—Concluding observations.*

SINCE the commencement of the present century, several efforts have been made to effect a union between the Irish Burghers and Antiburghers. The negotiations uniformly failed on the part of the Antiburghers, not because they were less anxious than the others for a reconciliation, but because they were subject to a

General Synod in Scotland, which more than once interfered, and prevented them from proceeding with their arrangements. At length, however, they grew weary of this foreign dictation, and agreed upon a basis of union, in which they disavowed the jurisdiction of the Scottish judicatory. The terms of coalescence having been settled to the satisfaction of both parties, the two synods, then in Cookstown, met together on the evening of Thursday, the 9th of July 1818, in the place of worship belonging to the congregation connected with the synod of Ulster, and formed themselves into one body, under the designation of "The Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, distinguished by the name Seceders." The Rev. James Rentoul of Ray was chosen the first moderator of the United Church. Its ministers at this period amounted to ninety-seven.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately after the union, the Secession Church entered with great zeal upon the project of a home mission, and set up preaching-stations in various towns and villages where Presbyte-

<sup>1</sup> The two synods agreed that the six points following should form the basis of union:—

"1. To declare their constant and inviolable attachment to their already approved and recognised standards, namely, the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Directory for Worship, and Form of Presbyterian Church government, with the Original Secession Testimony.

"2. That, as they unite under the banner of a testimony, they are determined, in all times coming, as their forefathers have set them the example, to assert the truth when it is injured or opposed, and to condemn and testify against error and immorality whenever they may seem to prevail.

"3. To cancel the name of Burgher and Antiburgher for ever, and to unite the two synods into one, to be known by the name 'The Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, distinguished by the name Seceders.'

"4. To declare their insubordination to any other ecclesiastical court, while, at the same time, they do hereby signify their hearty inclination to hold a correspondence with their sister Church in Scotland or elsewhere, for their mutual edification; but think it expedient not to lay themselves under any restrictions as to the manner of said correspondence.

"5. To allow all the presbyteries and congregations in their connection to bear the same name, and, in the meantime, stand as they were before the coalescence.

"6. Carefully to preserve all the public records of the two synods from their formation in this kingdom till the present day."

rianism was then comparatively unknown. In the erection of the congregation of Drogheda, it was soon permitted to recognise some of the fruits of its labours. In 1822, the Rev. Josias Wilson<sup>2</sup> was transferred from Tassagh, near Armagh, to the newly-formed church, and, under that highly popular minister, it speedily became one of the most flourishing settlements connected with the Secession Synod.

Shortly before the union of the two bodies of Seceders, the synod of Ulster began to assume somewhat of a missionary character. The Rev. James Horner of Dublin,<sup>3</sup> the Rev. Henry Cooke of Donegore,<sup>4</sup> and the Rev. Robert Stewart of Broughshane, were its first missionary agents. The synod of Munster, in July 1818, at a meeting held in Dublin, unanimously agreed upon a vote of thanks to Messrs. Cooke and Stewart for "the zeal, prudence, diligence, and ability" with which they had recently supplied Carlow. The Presbyterians of that place had belonged originally to the southern synod, but the society had become extinct about the year 1750, and the people, collected together by the two northern missionaries, applied to the synod of Ulster to be recognised as a congregation under its ecclesiastical superintendence. The request was granted, and this little flock, the first-born of the modern missionary zeal of Irish Presbyterianism, obtained for its minister a very young man, who had been a

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Wilson removed in 1836 to Belfast, where he collected a large congregation. He subsequently accepted a call from the Presbyterian congregation, River Terrace, London, and was installed there in 1844. He died in 1847, in the prime of life, greatly regretted. His "Life" has been written by his friend Dr. Hastings. London, 1850.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Horner was Dr. M'Dowel's colleague in Mary's Abbey, Dublin. He was ordained co-pastor in November 1791, and died in January 1843. He was entrusted with the management of much of the public business of the synod, and was remarkable for his tact and shrewdness.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Cooke was ordained, as minister of Dunean, on the 10th of November 1808. He resigned the charge on the 13th of November 1810, and, on the 22d January 1811, was installed minister of Donegore. Some years after his settlement there, he was permitted to attend the medical classes in Dublin, and at this period he was in the habit of travelling on Saturday to Carlow, for the purpose of preaching on the Sabbath to the infant congregation of that place.

member of the first class of the first theological professor ever formally appointed by the synod of Ulster. On the 21st of June 1820, the presbytery of Dublin ordained the Rev. James Morgan to the pastoral charge of the congregation of Carlow.

The synod of Munster<sup>5</sup> not only passed a vote of thanks to Messrs. Cooke and Stewart for their services in this place, but also, in a letter directed to the moderator, and submitted to the annual meeting of 1818, expressed their readiness to assist the synod of Ulster in "extending the Presbyterian interest in the South of Ireland." The northern synod cordially accepted the offer; a committee, composed of some of the leading members of the two bodies, was subsequently formed; and for some time the united mission was harmoniously conducted. The agents employed to officiate in the new stations were generally ministers from Ulster, of popular talents and evangelical principles. But it was not to be expected that a society, composed of such heterogeneous elements, could long peacefully combine. The spirit of division soon appeared, and when the Arian controversy reached its climax, the united mission fell to pieces.

Since the commencement of the reign of George III., the synod of Ulster, the synod of Munster, and the presbytery of Antrim, had frequently manifested an anxiety to be known as one great Presbyterian fraternity. The last important public occasion on which they appeared in their associated character was when George IV. visited Ireland in 1821. At that time the three bodies presented a joint address to the sovereign. On Monday, the 20th of August, the deputation, consisting of forty-one ministers and sixty lay gentlemen, assembled in Dublin, at the Royal Exchange; the ministers were arrayed in gowns and bands, and the lay gentlemen in court dresses; and, headed by

<sup>5</sup> It is right to inform the general reader that this body, though bearing the designation of *synod*, had the oversight of only eight or nine small congregations. Its ministers now (1853) amount only to five or six, and its congregations, which are mere shadows, to four or five. The present "presbytery of Munster" is an orthodox body, consisting of nine ministers, and the Irish General Assembly has now under its care a considerable number of congregations in Leinster, Munster, and Connaught.



the three moderators, they moved towards the castle in regular procession. On their arrival, they were conducted to St. Patrick's hall, where two other deputations, one of the Society of Friends, and another of the Roman Catholic prelates, awaited with them an introduction into the royal presence. The Presbyterian deputies were first admitted, and the Rev. Edward Reid of Ramelton,<sup>6</sup> the moderator of the synod of Ulster, read the address with admirable dignity and pathos. During the scene, the monarch exhibited "tokens of sensibility deeply touched," and appeared to be particularly gratified by this manifestation of loyalty on the part of his Irish Presbyterian subjects.

The current of events was, meanwhile, gradually leading to a crisis between the orthodox party and the Unitarians. The synod of Ulster was silently assuming a more decidedly evangelical character, and was tolerating, with increasing impatience, the deadly heresy with which its energies were paralysed or oppressed. The publication of a code of laws, which had long been in course of preparation, furnished it with a quiet opportunity for virtually repudiating all ecclesiastical connection with the synod of Munster and the presbytery of Antrim. Though the Presbyterian Church had existed so long in Ireland, its disciplinary regulations were still scattered among synodical records, the greater number of which were to be found only in manuscript, and which, consequently, were almost inaccessible. Disputed points of order were generally determined by an appeal to the more aged and experienced ministers, who, by their long attendance on Church courts, had become intimately acquainted with ecclesiastical usages. Such a state of things was most unsatisfactory, and at length, at the annual meeting of the synod of Ulster in 1808, the Rev. James Horner of Mary's Abbey, Dublin, announced his intention of proposing the appointment of a committee "to draw up a code of disciplinary laws for the go-

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Reid, the brother of the historian, was ordained minister of Ramelton on the 8th of December 1806, and died on the 11th of February 1838. He was a man of superior talent, very acceptable as a minister, and of great dignity of character. He was highly respected by all ranks in the neighbourhood of Ramelton, and possessed much influence.

vernment of the body.”<sup>7</sup> A committee, consisting of a minister from each presbytery, was subsequently nominated, but the arrangement was soon found to be inconvenient, and, in 1810, it was agreed that Mr. Thomson of Carnmoney, Mr. Hanna, and Mr. Horner, should prepare the draft of the intended publication. Owing to a variety of circumstances, the work proceeded very slowly, and, in 1819, in consequence of the increasing infirmities of Mr. Thomson, on whom the chief labour had hitherto devolved, Mr. Cooke was added to the committee. In 1820, a larger committee was appointed to review what had already been prepared, and it was resolved, at the annual meeting of 1821, that an introduction, by Dr. Malcom of Newry, should be prefixed to the publication. This introduction was eventually laid aside, as, though in some respects an able performance, it was considered by the orthodox members of the synod a somewhat unsound exposition of the principles of Presbyterianism. The work, after having undergone various amendments, was adopted almost unanimously by the synod, in 1824, “as its canon of discipline and Church government.”<sup>8</sup> In 1825, it appeared in print as “the constitution and discipline of the Presbyterian Church; with a directory for the celebration of ordinances, and the performance of ministerial duties, published by authority of the General Synod of Ulster.” At the annual meeting of synod in the same year, thanks were “returned to the committee, particularly to Mr. Cooke, for the zeal, diligence, and ability evinced by them in the discharge of their laborious duty.”

The synod of Ulster had long admitted the synod of Munster and the presbytery of Antrim to the privileges of ecclesiastical brotherhood; their ministers had been repeatedly invited to sit and deliberate at its annual meetings, and they had occasionally mingled in its debates;<sup>9</sup> even their licentiates had been permitted to officiate in its pulpits and to preach in its vacancies; but, from

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of 1808, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of 1824, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> In 1817, Dr. Bruce spoke in a debate relative to the Belfast Institution, and, in 1820, the Rev. T. D. Hincks, a member of the synod of Munster, was invited “to sit, deliberate, and vote with the synod.”

the date of the publication of the code of discipline, this ecclesiastical relationship ceased to be recognised. The volume now presented to the public, as the authorised exposition of the constitution of the General Synod, takes no notice of either of these associations, and thus ignores the position which they had hitherto occupied. By the adoption of the code, another point of still greater importance was secured. For at least half a century, subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith had fallen into disuse in the greater number of the presbyteries,<sup>10</sup> and candidates had been admitted to license without any reference to their religious principles. It was now provided, that "presbyteries, before they license candidates to preach the Gospel, *shall ascertain the soundness of their faith*, either by requiring subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, or by such examinations as they shall consider best adapted *for this purpose*."<sup>11</sup> The synod here made a noble effort to assert the principles of its ancient constitution, for it thus explicitly declared that the Church has a right to institute a searching inquiry into the sentiments of all candidates for license, that heterodoxy is a valid ground of exclusion from the ministry, that the theology of the confession had the seal of its approval, and that any presbytery, which chose to exercise the power, was authorised to require subscription to the Westminster formula.

The Arian party in the synod were wonderfully satisfied with the code of discipline; and, extraordinary as it may now appear, the paragraph just quoted seemed to elicit their special admiration. They hailed it as tantamount to a repeal of the law of subscription, and as a new triumph of what they called the cause of religious freedom! They had been so long accustomed to cloak their errors in ambiguous phraseology, that possibly, on this occasion, they did not apprehend the grammatical meaning of a

<sup>10</sup> Subscription was still kept up in five of the fourteen presbyteries of the synod of Ulster. The subscribing presbyteries were Dromore, Belfast, Route, Tyrone, and Dublin. It does not seem to have been entirely laid aside in all the rest.

<sup>11</sup> "Constitution and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church," p. 28. Belfast, 1825.

plain statement; and because in certain presbyteries, in which they might still have a majority of friends, they could contrive to evade the letter, as well as the spirit of the regulation, they exulted no little in their contraband privileges. But they were speedily convinced that they had little cause for gratulation. Before the code had received the final sanction of the Church, one of the most gifted ministers of whom the synod of Ulster could ever boast had proclaimed open war against Arianism.

On the 8th of September 1818, the Rev. Henry Cooke, formerly minister of Donegore, was invested with the pastoral charge of the congregation of Killileagh. This was a most auspicious event for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. In doctrine, Mr. Cooke had been always a professed Calvinist, but, when in Donegore, he was connected with a presbytery which had long been noted for the heterodoxy of its members. He now belonged to the subscribing presbytery of Dromore, in which he breathed a more genial ecclesiastical atmosphere. When he came to reside in Killileagh, he also enjoyed the singular advantage of the intimate acquaintance of a Christian gentleman, distinguished less by his honourable birth than by his elevated piety. Captain Sidney Hamilton Rowan, a scion of the noble house of Clanboy and Clanbrasil, was now a member of his session, and, for many years afterwards, discharged, with exemplary faithfulness, the duties of an elder in his congregation. Mr. Cooke, in the ecclesiastical struggles which ensued, had the benefit of his counsel and co-operation, and was often stimulated and encouraged by his hallowed intercourse.<sup>12</sup> The late minister of Donegore had been already known as a man of superior talent, and a sermon, which he published so early as 1815, had speedily gone through three editions;<sup>13</sup> but, until some time after his settlement in Killi-

<sup>12</sup> For a more particular account of this truly eminent Christian, see his "Funeral Sermon," by the Rev. Andrew Breakey, Killileagh. Belfast, 1847. He was the son of the celebrated Archibald Hamilton Rowan, and the son-in-law of John Jackson, Esq., of Crieve, Ballibay. See note 74, chapter xxx.

<sup>13</sup> This sermon was preached in Rosemary Street Church, Belfast, on the 18th of December 1814, in aid of the funds of the House of Industry. It is remarkable for the absence of evangelical sentiment.



leagh, he was not particularly distinguished as an ecclesiastical reformer. In the year 1821, the Rev. J. Smithurst, a Unitarian minister from the neighbourhood of Exeter, in England, visited the North of Ireland, and preached in Belfast, Moneyrea, Saintfield, Downpatrick, and other places. In his tour he did not overlook Killileagh, as it was understood that some abettors of Unitarianism were to be found in that locality. But he soon discovered that the minister of the town was quite competent to instruct his own parishioners. Mr. Cooke replied to his discourse,<sup>14</sup> and exposed with amazing ability the shallow sophistry of his Unitarian arguments. But this was not all. The agent of the English Unitarian Fund Association found, to his confusion, that he was not in exclusive possession of the missionary spirit, for wherever he preached in the neighbourhood, Mr. Cooke made his appearance, and proceeded forthwith to refute his expositions. Wearied with his bootless errand, Mr. Smithurst in a short time sought rest in his native country from the most troublesome adversary he had ever encountered.

From this period Mr. Cooke was known as the bold and uncompromising assailant of Unitarianism. The election of a professor in the Belfast Academical Institution soon supplied him with a more public opportunity of proclaiming his hostility to the system. In October 1821, the Rev. W. Bruce was chosen to succeed the Rev. Dr. Neilson in the Greek chair, and in 1822, at the annual meeting of the General Synod in Newry, the appoint-

<sup>14</sup> The Unitarian missionary on this occasion preached in a decayed building at Killileagh, and delivered only one sermon in the place. Mr. Cooke and Captain Rowan were both present to hear it. At the close of the service, Captain Rowan said to Mr. Smithurst—"These are not the doctrines our minister teaches, and here he is." The stranger professed his readiness to enter instantly into a discussion; but Mr. Cooke stated, that as Mr. Smithurst had chosen his own time and manner of procedure, he would do the same. He would first call together his own congregation, and refute the doctrines now asserted, and then, if Mr. Smithurst wished, he would meet him in discussion. In a few days afterwards, Mr. Cooke entered on a refutation of the arguments of the Unitarian preacher, and then followed him to Downpatrick, Saintfield, Clough, and other neighbouring towns, where he replied to his sermons in the hearing of large and attentive audiences.

ment was the subject of a rather animated discussion. Up till this date, a considerable section of the Belfast Unitarians had kept aloof from the Academical Institution, but they had been propitiated by the election of Mr. Bruce, and the united strength of the whole party was now pledged to the support of the establishment. Mr. Bruce, though an accomplished scholar and a most honourable man, was not deemed superior, in point of literary qualifications, to one or two other candidates of undoubted orthodoxy, and Mr. Cooke accordingly complained, not only that a heterodox minister had been chosen to instruct the students of the Church in the language of the New Testament, but that the Unitarians had now acquired a preponderating influence in the management of the seminary.<sup>15</sup> For several successive years this subject engaged the attention of the synod, and created various unhappy controversies in the newspapers and elsewhere, but these discussions did not lead to any satisfactory arrangement.

Whilst the disputes which commenced with the election of Professor Bruce were still unsettled, his father, the Rev. Dr. Bruce of Belfast, published a volume of sermons, which were perused with eagerness and criticised with severity. The date of the appearance of these discourses marks a most interesting period in the theological history of Ulster, as they contained, on the part of a Presbyterian minister, "the first printed avowal and defence of Unitarian opinions in Ireland since the time of Emlyn."<sup>16</sup> The religious public was startled by the boldness with which they announced a variety of strange doctrines, and a

<sup>15</sup> For the information of some readers, it may here be necessary to state, that a subscription of twenty guineas constituted a proprietor of the institution, and that the boards entrusted with the patronage of the establishment, as well as with its management, were chosen by the proprietors out of their own body. It is but fair to add, in reference to the election of Mr. Bruce, that the moderator of the synod of Ulster, though a Trinitarian, both spoke and voted in favour of that gentleman. This fact was peculiarly embarrassing to Mr. Cooke.

<sup>16</sup> I here quote the words of the Rev. J. S. Porter, in his "Sermon on the death of Dr. Bruce," p. 15, with the limitation "on the part of a Presbyterian minister," as otherwise the case of the Bishop of Clogher would be a notable exception.

considerable number of persons, who had been connected with Dr. Bruce's own congregation, withdrew from his ministry.<sup>17</sup> The author had stated, in a preface to the sermons, that the principles he advocated were making extensive, though silent progress, in the General Synod; and that body, at its annual meeting in 1824, publicly contradicted the assertion. Arianism now began to form a topic of general discussion, and its merits were frequently canvassed, as well from the pulpit as the platform. The public thus became better acquainted with its real character. An antidote to the discourses of Dr. Bruce was soon furnished, in another form, by a Covenanted minister, the Rev. John Paul of Carrickfergus.<sup>18</sup> Mr. Paul was an acute and a powerful polemic, and his "Refutation of Arianism," which obtained very extensive circulation, rendered essential service to the cause of orthodoxy.

Mr. Cooke was, meanwhile, chosen moderator of the synod of Ulster, and, during his year of office, was summoned to give evidence before the "Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry." When under examination, in reference to the Belfast Institution, he was interrogated respecting the general condition of the Irish Presbyterian Church, and the extent to which Arianism prevailed. He stated, that of two hundred ministers belonging to the synod, "about thirty-five" were Arians. The Rev. William

<sup>17</sup> "Sermon," by Rev. J. S. Porter, p. 15. In his sermons, Dr. Bruce not only denies the supreme Deity of Christ, but likewise the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. He also teaches the doctrine of the final annihilation of the sinner.

<sup>18</sup> Dr. Paul died on the 17th of March 1848, aged seventy-one years. He was ordained minister of the Covenanted congregation of Loughmourne in 1804. After the period mentioned in the text, he became involved in a controversy with Dr. Houston of Knockbracken, relative to the power of the civil magistrate, in consequence of which, in 1840, a disruption took place in the Covenanted Synod. The two parties are now known as the "Reformed Presbyterian Synod of Ireland," adhering to the principles of Dr. Houston, and consisting of upwards of twenty ministers and congregations, and the "Eastern Reformed Presbyterian Synod," adhering to the views of Dr. Paul, and consisting of ten ministers and congregations. The Eastern Synod is understood to adhere somewhat less rigidly to the original ecclesiastical standards of the Covenanted body than the Reformed Synod.

Porter of Newtownlimavady was then the clerk of the synod, and as it was supposed that he was able to supply important information, he also was summoned before the parliamentary commissioners. When examined, Mr. Porter avowed himself an Arian, expressed his belief that the system was "gaining ground amongst the thinking few," and gave it as his opinion that there were "more real Arians than professed ones" amongst the ministers with whom he was officially connected. The Report<sup>19</sup> of the Commissioners, in which this evidence appeared, was not ordered by the House of Commons to be printed until the 26th of February 1827, but when it was presented to the public in an authentic form, it occasioned no small excitement. At the next annual meeting of synod, which was held in Strabane, the Rev. Robert Magill of Antrim<sup>20</sup> moved, immediately after the calling of the roll and the appointment of a moderator, that "the Rev. William Porter, having publicly avowed himself to be an Arian, be no longer continued clerk." Though Mr. Porter was respected as a man of talent and integrity, many felt that, as he was a conspicuous office-bearer, the character of the Church was compromised by his avowal of heresy; and yet, so long as he was recognised as a minister of the Word, they did not see how he could be pronounced disqualified for performing the duties of a secretary. The motion led, however, to a sharp debate, which did not terminate till the evening of the following day, when it was agreed that the synod should pointedly condemn certain parts of the evidence of Mr. Porter, but that, to avoid the imputation of "persecution for the sake of opinion," he should be permitted to retain his situation.<sup>21</sup> Another resolution, better fitted to test

<sup>19</sup> "The Fourth Report." Dr. Hanna, Dr. S. Edgar, Mr. Carlile, and several other Presbyterian ministers, were examined before the same commission.

<sup>20</sup> Mr. Magill was ordained on the 20th of June 1820, and died on the 19th of February 1839. He had a vivid imagination, and certain tones of his voice were so exquisitely tender, that, when touching on particular subjects, he could almost at once melt an auditory into tears. He enjoyed great popularity as a preacher.

<sup>21</sup> A government salary of £50 per annum, late Irish currency, was attached to the clerkship.



the principles of the body, was shortly afterwards introduced. As it had been stated, before the parliamentary commissioners, that there were a considerable number of concealed Arians in the synod, Mr. Cooke moved that the members of the court, "for the purpose of affording a public testimony to the truth, as well as of vindicating their religious character as individuals, declare, that they do most firmly hold and believe the doctrine concerning the nature of God contained in these words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, namely, that 'there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.'" The most exciting discussion which had taken place in the synod for a century now commenced. After several other members had given expression to their sentiments, the Rev. Henry Montgomery,<sup>22</sup> minister of Dunmurry, and head master of the English department in the Belfast Academical Institution, addressed the chair, and in a speech, which occupied upwards of an hour in the delivery, made an appeal which would have proved completely irresistible had the palm of victory been awarded to an effort of finished eloquence. From an early period of his ministerial life, Mr. Montgomery had taken a deep interest in the business of the synod, and he was now the acknowledged leader of the New-Light party, but he had never before signalled himself by such a splendid and impressive display. His great object was to demonstrate the iniquity of creeds or confessions, and comparatively few were persuaded by his arguments; but throughout his speech the whole assembly hung upon his lips, as if under the enchantment of some mighty magician. Even when he sat down, the auditory still continued to be in a state of agitation, and a considerable time elapsed before any other speaker could gain

<sup>22</sup> Mr. Montgomery was ordained minister of Dunmurry on the 14th of September 1809. In 1818, he was chosen moderator of the synod. Dunmurry is a village in the neighbourhood of Belfast. It may be necessary to state, for the information of some readers, that there was originally a school, as well as a college department, belonging to the Belfast Institution. Mr. Montgomery was head master of the English school. The school department of the institution is still continued.

the attention of the house. It appeared, notwithstanding, that his address had failed to impart conviction to his brethren, for, after a debate of two days' continuance, Mr. Cooke's motion was carried by an overwhelming majority. One hundred and seventeen ministers and eighteen elders voted in its support, two ministers opposed it, and eight ministers declined voting.<sup>23</sup>

The synod was now in a position in which it could not remain stationary, and many anticipated that its next annual meeting would decide the fate of Arianism, as connected with the leading section of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. In the interim, neither party was deficient in zeal or activity. The fame of the speech of Mr. Montgomery at Strabane had gone abroad over the province, and it was immediately printed in a variety of forms, and circulated with uncommon industry. But that same Mr. Paul, who had already analysed the sermons of Dr. Bruce with such ability, again came forward, through the medium of the press, with an examination of the logic of the minister of Dunmurry. In a "Review," which he published in the early part of 1828, he so completely demolished every particle of argument to be found in the speech, that sober men began to wonder why they had been so strangely fascinated by so feeble a performance. As a defence of creeds and confessions, in reply to Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Paul's production is quite unanswerable.

Prior to the meeting of the General Synod in 1828, the different parties were busily occupied in sounding the note of preparation. Various publications appeared in the newspapers, calling upon the friends of orthodoxy to gird themselves for the coming

<sup>23</sup> It was agreed that the question should be put in the form of "believe the doctrine," or "not," and that each member should stand up when voting. Every one who voted "believe the doctrine," thus publicly acknowledged the article of the Trinity, as set forth in the Shorter Catechism. At the synod of Cookstown, in 1828, such ministers and elders as were present, and had not attended the annual meeting of the preceding year, were called upon to state their views on the same subject. Thirty-eight ministers and fifty-nine elders voted "believe," four ministers and fourteen elders voted "not," one minister withdrew, three ministers and two elders did not answer to their names, and two elders protested against any such question being put to them.

struggle; and, on the 18th of June, the admirers of Mr. Montgomery of Dunmurry presented that gentleman with a laudatory address, accompanied with the more substantial donation of a service of plate, weighing one thousand ounces. The synod assembled at Cookstown, on Tuesday the 24th of June, under circumstances of intense interest, and an attendance of ministers and elders, more numerous than had ever been known before, indicated the deep anxiety with which the proceedings were anticipated. After several days spent in debates of minor consequence, and in the transaction of routine business, Mr. Cooke, on Friday, moved a series of overtures,<sup>24</sup> pledging the synod to esta-

<sup>24</sup> As the passing of these overtures formed the crisis in the Arian controversy, they deserve to be fully recorded. They are as follow :—

“ I. That many of the evils which now unhappily exist in the General Synod of Ulster have arisen from the admission of persons holding Arian sentiments, contrary to the accredited standards of this body, as founded on the Word of God ; from the occasional admission of others, who, though nominally holding, in sound words and profession, the form of godliness, were yet deniers of the power thereof ; and consequently destitute of that zeal which is necessary to the dissemination of the Gospel.

“ II. That while we are individually bound to use all Scriptural means to guard against the continuance of these evils, it is also our duty, as a Church, to adopt such regulations as may, with the Divine blessing, prove effectual to prevent the introduction of ministers unenlightened by the Spirit of God, and to advance spiritual religion in our Church courts and congregations.

“ III. That before any person be recognised as a candidate for the ministry, he shall, previously to entering a theological class, be enjoined to present himself at our annual meeting, to be examined by a committee of this synod, respecting his personal religion, his knowledge of the Scriptures, especially his views of the doctrines of the Trinity, original sin, justification by faith, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit ; and, likewise, as to his motives for offering himself a candidate for the sacred office of the ministry ; and that, should any such examinant be found opposed to those doctrines, or appear to be destitute of vital godliness, he shall in no case be recognised as a candidate for the ministry in this synod.

“ IV. That students, after having finished their theological course, and their trials in the presbytery, shall again present themselves for a similar examination before the same committee ; and it shall be the duty of that committee to ascertain their soundness in the faith, by requiring from them a statement of their views of the doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

lish a committee for the examination of candidates for license and ordination, with a view to exclude from the sacred office all who either denied the doctrines of the Trinity, original sin, justification by faith, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, or who appeared to be destitute of vital godliness. This motion, which was seconded by the Rev. Samuel Dill of Donoughmore,<sup>25</sup> was followed by a debate, which did not terminate until the afternoon of Saturday, when, on putting the question to the vote, the overtures were carried by a majority of eighty-two—ninety-nine ministers and forty elders voting “pass,” and forty ministers and seventeen elders voting “not pass.”

At this meeting of synod, Mr. Cooke, now regarded as the leader of the Old-Light party, exhibited great tact, decision, and intrepidity. He had to contend against the waywardness of some who were the staunch supporters of his own theological sentiments, but who imagined that measures of less stringency would have been sufficient for the reformation of the Church. An immense majority of the Presbyterian laity of Ulster were, however, decidedly in favour of his policy, and public opinion told power-

“V. That if any person thus licensed be afterwards found not to preach the doctrines of the Trinity, original sin, justification by faith, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, or to avow any principles in opposition to these doctrines, he shall not be continued in fellowship with this body.

“VI. Persons who are already preachers in this body, but have not been licensed according to these regulations, shall, previously to ordination, be required to undergo a similar examination.

“VII. Should any person be licensed or ordained, in opposition to these regulations, such license or ordination shall not be deemed valid by this body.

“VIII. The committee for these examinations shall annually be appointed in open synod.”

The design of this last overture was to exclude all Arians from the committee of examination.

<sup>25</sup> Mr. Dill was ordained to the charge of Donoughmore, near Raphoe, in July 1799, and died in December 1845. Few members of the synod of Ulster throughout life so well sustained the credit of the ministerial character. He was a lover of learning, a cheerful companion, and a man of enlightened and ardent piety. He, and others of his name, had protested, long before, against the toleration of Arians in the synod of Ulster. See chapter xxx., note 84.



fully on the synodical discussions. At this important crisis, an early friend, of extraordinary endowments, rendered him most efficient aid, both in consultation and in debate. The Rev. Robert Stewart of Broughshane<sup>26</sup> made no pretensions to the polished beauties of a captivating eloquence, but he was noted for his rare sagacity, his readiness and fluency as a speaker, his sparkling wit, and his imperturbable equanimity. For many years he had taken a leading part in the management of synodical affairs; and, in the July of the year preceeding, he had acquired great reputation by a public discussion with a Roman Catholic priest, in which he had completely prostrated an able antagonist.<sup>27</sup> On the present occasion, he encountered a more formidable champion with signal success. Mr. Montgomery, in a vigorous and ingenious speech, of upwards of two hours in length, had opposed the adoption of the overtures moved by Mr. Cooke; and Mr. Stewart, in an impromptu reply, which occupied nearly as much time, and which was heard throughout with profound attention, exposed, with most damaging effect, the assumptions and the special pleading of the Arian leader. And it was not merely at this juncture that Mr. Cooke felt the value of the services of the minister of Broughshane. On ecclesiastical questions, they generally held the same views, and Mr. Stewart almost uniformly sustained him in the intellectual conflict. There were times when the orthodox leader, irritated, it may be, by the pertinacity or the petulance of assailants, would express himself with rather uncomfortable pungency; and, when an unpleasant altercation was likely to ensue, as yielding to the impetuosity of his spirit, he scorched with his sarcasm or maddened with his

<sup>26</sup> Dr. Stewart was ordained minister of Broughshane on the 9th of May 1809. In 1816, he was chosen moderator of the General Synod, and in 1843 of the General Assembly. He died in September 1852, in the seventieth year of his age, and forty-fourth of his ministry.

<sup>27</sup> This discussion took place in the court-house of Ballymena in July 1827, and was continued for three successive days. So great was the interest it created, that many distinguished individuals from distant parts of the country were present on the occasion. The principal topic of discussion was the doctrine of the Papal supremacy.

irony. Mr. Stewart, at once perceiving the rising storm, would promptly interpose, and contrive, by some happy stroke of humour, or some well-timed explanation, to restore good feeling to the assembly.

The passing of the overtures effectually closed the door against the admission of Arians into the ministry of the synod of Ulster. The members of the committee appointed for examination were all decided Trinitarians, and a heterodox candidate had not the slightest prospect of obtaining their approbation. The New-Light party now saw that, if they could not speedily induce the orthodox majority to yield, they could not themselves remain in their present condition. Another resolution might exclude them from the synod, or, if permitted to continue in the body, they must be prepared to submit to their own gradual extinction. They accordingly began to consider the propriety of separation. At a meeting convened by public advertisement, and held in Belfast on the 16th of October 1828, they adopted a REMONSTRANCE, in which their alleged grievances were set forth, and in which they declared that, if they could not obtain a repeal of the obnoxious overtures, they must form themselves into a distinct association. At the same time, they agreed to publish and circulate this manifesto, and they invited all ministers, licentiates, students, elders, and private individuals, opposed to the late proceedings of the synod, to affix to it their signatures.

All parties now awaited with anxiety the next annual meeting of the General Synod. A few days before it assembled, an event occurred which added considerably to the public excitement. In March 1829, Dr. John Young, professor of moral philosophy in the Belfast Institution, died, and there was a general desire throughout the synod of Ulster that the Rev. James Carlile of Mary's Abbey, Dublin, who had been induced to become a candidate for the chair, should be appointed his successor. Mr. Carlile was already known as one of the most learned Protestant ministers in Ireland; as his mind was remarkable for its metaphysical acuteness, he was believed to be peculiarly qualified for the vacant office; and the moderator of the synod, who was one of the electors, was instructed to support him in preference to any other

candidate. But on the day of appointment, to the surprise of a large portion of the community, Mr. John Ferrie, a licentiate of the Church of Scotland, and a gentleman as yet almost unknown to the literary public, had a majority of suffrages. It was understood that the Rev. Henry Montgomery had contributed to Mr. Carlile's defeat; and, as the minister of Mary's Abbey had recently published an able work in defence of the Deity of Christ,<sup>28</sup> rumour, with its hundred tongues, was ready to assign a cause for the hostility of the Unitarian leader.

Matters were in this state when the synod met in Lurgan, on Tuesday, the 30th of June 1829. The subject of the late election in the Belfast Institution was soon brought under discussion, and Mr. Cooke expressed, in very emphatic terms, his disapproval of Mr. Ferrie's appointment. It was remarked, that though the successful candidate had been chaplain to the University of Glasgow, he had no testimonial from Dr. Magill, its pious and enlightened professor of theology, and it was alleged that certain students had complained of his ministrations in the college chapel as anti-evangelical. The debate had continued for some time when Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Cooke came into direct collision, and, on the fourth day of its meeting, the synod of Ulster witnessed a display of eloquence which would have been pronounced magnificent, had it occurred even in the most illustrious assembly of the empire. Mr. Montgomery had evidently summoned all his strength for the occasion; and, as if anticipating his speedy secession, seemed resolved to make his last appearance in the synod memorable, by the infliction of a fatal wound on the reputation of his great ecclesiastical antagonist. Standing immediately below the pulpit, and in full view of a crowded auditory, his tall and portly figure, his well-toned voice, and his graceful elocution, imparted additional effect to an address of uncommon

<sup>28</sup> The title of this work is, "Jesus Christ the Great God and our Saviour." Dublin, 1828. Duod., pp. 471. At a much earlier period, Mr. Carlile had published, in one volume octavo, a series of valuable sermons on "Faith and Repentance." He has since published, in two volumes duodecimo, "Letters on the Divine Origin and Authority of the Holy Scriptures." Edinburgh, 1837. Dr. Carlile is the author of several other works.

ability. Appealing to a Report of Irish Education Inquiry which lay before him, and which he seemed to have diligently studied, he attempted to prove that certain statements, relative to the orthodoxy of the Scottish clergy, recently made by Mr. Cooke in the case of Mr. Ferrie, flatly contradicted his sworn testimony before the parliamentary commissioners. Not a few of the friends of the minister of Killileagh exchanged looks of trepidation and bewilderment as the Arian orator proceeded with his accusations, and as, now and again, waving the report in the face of the assembly, he apparently clenched the evidence in support of the various counts of his indictment. When he approached the termination of his speech, he alluded to the possibility of a division of the synod, and then, contrasting the strifes of earth with the serenity of heaven, the tones of his voice became unusually mellow and pathetic, as he closed with a sublime and touching peroration. For nearly three hours the house had now listened with mute attention, and when he sat down, it was agreed that the court should adjourn, and meet again, in a short time, to hear what the accused could say in explanation. When it reassembled, after the interval of half an hour, Mr. Cooke entered forthwith on his defence; and though his reply was obviously altogether unpremeditated, never did the representative of a great cause acquit himself, on a great occasion, more to the satisfaction of his party. It was plain from the outset that he felt strong in his integrity, and that he was fully prepared to answer his accuser, and tears of gladness rolled down many cheeks as, in pleading to the charge of perjury, he proceeded, to use his own impassioned phraseology, to "dash to atoms the atrocious calumny with the talisman of truth." His physical energies seemed as if increased for the emergency; for two hours, his distinct and deep-toned voice filled every part of the great assembly; and the attack of his assailant was repelled in an effort of sustained and surpassing brilliancy. As, point after point, he demolished the accusations of his adversary, his auditors could not restrain the expressions of their sympathy, and the house rang again with peals of acclamation. When he reached the close, the buzz of the excitement did not subside for several minutes, and all agreed



that, however high their expectations, they had not anticipated a vindication at once so prompt and so powerful.<sup>29</sup> Mr. Montgomery was constrained to bow to the decision of the auditory, and, during the remainder of the sittings of the court, did not again appear inclined to measure his strength with the Goliath of orthodoxy.

When the synod assembled at Lurgan, it was expected that the overtures adopted the preceding year would have formed the grand topic of debate; but when the discussion relative to the election of a professor in Belfast reached a termination, so many days had now elapsed, and such a quantity of other business was yet to come before the meeting, that it was found expedient to postpone their consideration. It was accordingly resolved that a special synod should be held in Cookstown, on the third Tuesday of the following August, to take up the subject. But the New-Light party now saw that it was useless to continue the struggle. All their attempts to maintain their position in the synod had been defeated by sweeping majorities, and public feeling had displayed itself unequivocally in favour of the friends of orthodoxy. The Unitarians, therefore, met in Belfast on the 30th of July, and agreed to absent themselves from the synod of Cookstown. They resolved to leave the settlement of the question of the overtures entirely to their orthodox brethren, and, should the result prove unsatisfactory, to propose an amicable separation. When the synod met on the 18th of August, it presented an aspect very different from what it had ever before exhibited in the memory of any of its ministers. The Unitarians had disappeared, with the exception of the Rev. William Porter, and an address, of which he was the bearer, and which he was permitted to read, announced the cause of their non-attendance. At the same time, various memorials from congregations were laid before the court, expressing approbation of the overtures, or urging the exclusion of the Arians from ecclesiastical communion. The REMONSTRANCE, signed by eighteen

<sup>29</sup> The reports published in the newspapers give a very inadequate idea of the speech as actually delivered.

ministers, fifteen students or licentiates, one hundred and ninety-seven elders, one hundred and thirty-eight members of the committees of congregations, and three hundred and fourteen seat-holders, was also presented.<sup>30</sup>

The discussion of the overtures occupied several sessions of the synod. A few members, of whom the Rev. Robert Gray of Dungeness was the leader, argued that a theological committee, entrusted with the examination of all candidates for the ministry, and invested with the power of approval and rejection, interfered directly with the rights of presbyteries, but their reasoning failed to make any impression. On a division, a motion for the reappointment of the committee passed without difficulty. Seventy-four ministers, and all the elders, voted "appoint," only three ministers voted "not," and three declined voting.

In the address presented by Mr. Porter to the synod, the Unitarians had requested that, in the event of the confirmation of the overtures, a committee should be nominated, furnished with full power to enter into an arrangement with them "for a friendly and Christian separation." The synod acceded to this proposal, and it was agreed that the conference should take place in Belfast on the 9th of the following September. Without entering into a detail of the negotiations now commenced, it may be sufficient to state that, in the end, seventeen ministers<sup>31</sup> with-

<sup>30</sup> The small number of signatures to a document of so much importance clearly proved that the Unitarians enjoyed a very small share of public sympathy. In some single congregations of the General Assembly there are more than three hundred and fourteen seat-holders.

<sup>31</sup> The following are the names of the seventeen separatists :—John Mitchell, Newry ; James Davis, Banbridge ; James Lunn, Carlingford ; Arthur Neilson, Kilmore ; Samuel Arnold, Narrow-water ; Samuel Craig Neilson, Dromore ; John Watson, Greyabbey ; John Mulligan, Moira ; Henry Montgomery, Dunmurry ; Fletcher Blakely, Moneyrea ; David White, Ballee ; William Porter, Newtownlinavady ; Thomas Alexander, Cairncastle ; Robert Campbell, Templepatrick ; Nathaniel Alexander, Crumlin ; Alexander Montgomery, Glenarm ; and William Glendy, Ballycarry. In almost all the places here mentioned, congregations under the care of the synod of Ulster were soon erected, which were much larger than those still adhering to the Remonstrant ministers.

drew from the jurisdiction of the synod; and, in accordance with the title of the document in which they had enumerated their objections to the overtures, assumed to themselves the designation of REMONSTRANTS. The separatists were, in several cases, deserted by the major part of their congregations. They were, however, permitted by government to continue in the enjoyment of the *Regium Donum*, they retained their interest in the Widows' Fund, and more recently the Dissenters' Chapels Act has secured them in the possession of their houses of worship. Their stipends may have suffered by the diminution of their congregations, but otherwise their pecuniary interests were not particularly affected by their withdrawal from the General Synod. On Tuesday, the 25th of May 1830, they assembled in Belfast, and formed themselves into a distinct body, under the name of "The Remonstrant Synod of Ulster." On this occasion "the Rev. Henry Montgomery read a letter which he had received from the Bolton Unitarian Association, expressive of the deepest and most encouraging sympathy" towards the new society.<sup>32</sup>

The confirmation of the overtures, by the reappointment of the theological committee at the meeting in Cookstown, terminated the career of Arianism in the synod of Ulster. Its history, as connected with the North of Ireland, is replete with instruction. It illustrates, in a striking manner, the value of ecclesiastical symbols. If Scriptural creeds do not in every case secure an evangelical ministry, they at least check the boldness of unsound teachers. Though the practice of subscription to the Westminster Confession had fallen into disuse in so many of the presbyteries of the General Synod, the law requiring it had never been

<sup>32</sup> Minutes of the first meeting of the Remonstrant Synod, p. 8. The Remonstrant Synod has at present (1853) under its care twenty-seven or twenty-eight congregations. Most of these are very small, the Sabbath attendance, in a considerable number of cases, not exceeding, on an average, more than two or three dozen individuals. Reckoning the Antrim Presbytery, the Remonstrant Synod, and the little association calling itself "the Synod of Munster," there are now in all Ireland about forty-two Unitarian congregations, and forty-nine or fifty Unitarian ministers. The whole population connected with the Irish Unitarians may probably amount to from 15,000 to 20,000 souls.

repealed, and the recollection of this fact operated as a restraint upon heterodox ministers. They could not decently or safely make a public attack on Calvinism so long as it was taught in their own accredited formularies, neither could they consistently condemn the zeal of those who were its faithful and earnest expositors. They might not dispense much of the nourishment of "the sincere milk of the Word," but they did not venture openly to introduce into their sermons a very strong infusion of deadly error. Their preaching was commonly a cold negation, and when heresy was uttered, it was often couched in language so obscure and so equivocal, that to all, save the initiated, it was quite incomprehensible. The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster divines was all the while in use among the people, they were accustomed to compare it with the Scriptures, and their children from infancy were made familiar with its pure and solid theology. Thus it was that when, during the progress of the late controversy, several of the ministers were obliged to avow their Unitarianism, not a few, who had long been connected with their congregations, were taken by surprise, and hastened away from the care of such overseers.

The annals of the synod of Ulster, for the hundred years prior to the Remonstrant separation, singularly display the spirit and tendency of Unitarianism. It entered "privily" into the Irish Presbyterian Church, like the pestilence that "walketh in darkness," and its virulence soon appeared in the traces of its desolation. Wherever it spread its infection, piety withered and died; and the deserted meeting-house proclaimed that "the glory" had departed. Under the pretence of contending against the imposition of creeds, it contrived to conceal its own creed from the people. According to the statement of one of its advocates, the year 1824 witnessed "the first printed avowal and defence" of its principles among the Presbyterians of the North of Ireland. And experience has demonstrated that it is entirely unsuited to the actual state of man. Other forms of error may captivate the senses and administer a measure of false comfort, but Unitarianism can neither satisfy the reason, nor light up the imagination, nor pacify the conscience. As, with the eye of scepticism, it sur-



veys the glorious truths of revelation, it scarcely ever changes its frigid countenance ; and, as it fails to catch the spirit of the holy oracles, no wonder that it cannot impart either the "faith, nothing wavering," or the hope that "maketh not ashamed." It is, in fact, little better than a species of sublimated deism, and it must be peculiarly offensive to Him on whose head are "many crowns," as it at once degrades His character, and makes light of His salvation.

The history of Arianism, as connected with the synod of Ulster, clearly points out the advantages of a Scriptural form of ecclesiastical polity. The synod always recognised the right of the people to elect their ministers, and the enlightened exercise of this privilege tended greatly to impede the progress of anti-evangelical principles. For at least a quarter of a century before the commencement of the Arian controversy, congregations had been scanning with increasing vigilance the doctrines propounded from the pulpit ; and, on the occurrence of a vacancy, the very suspicion of "New-Light" was almost sure to destroy the prospects of a candidate. In 1827, when the synod began fairly to grapple with the question, the people themselves had already performed so effectually the process of purgation, that only a comparatively small fraction of the body was tainted with Unitarianism. The passing of the overtures, in 1828, laid a final arrest upon its progress ; and a considerable number of the orthodox members of the synod were desirous that the Unitarians then among them should be suffered *to die out*, as well to avoid the irritation of a schism, as to secure for their flocks, on their demise, the benefits of an evangelical ministry. Had they chosen to remain, they might not, possibly, have been visited with excision ; but they deemed it better voluntarily to withdraw than to submit to the inglorious alternative of consenting to the gradual annihilation of their party. The narrative of their overthrow and separation supplies a striking proof of the conservative energy of Presbyterian government. A doctrinal reformation, so rapid and so complete, has never yet been effected in any Church, either Independent or Prelatic.

The struggle which terminated in 1829 had a much more satisfactory conclusion than the controversy of the same description

which convulsed the Irish Presbyterian community towards the commencement of the preceding century. In popular eloquence and personal accomplishments, Abernethy, and some of those who acted with him, were superior to their orthodox opponents, and they thus contrived to secure an amount of support which they could not otherwise have expected. The minds of a large section of the members of the synod were fairly bewildered by their sophistry, so that even the vote which decided the exclusion of the Antrim presbytery betrayed the vacillation of a perplexed judicatory. After their separation, they had still many who sympathised with them among those with whom they had been previously associated; and though they ceased to meet with them in ecclesiastical courts, they did not break up the intercourse of ministerial communion. It was otherwise in the late conflict. There were ministers among the orthodox majority who were greatly superior to any of the Unitarians in general learning and in logical acuteness. Mr. Montgomery was most formidable in debate, and some of his speeches are models of classic and manly eloquence; but his theology was miserably superficial, and he had to contend with an orator of equal power, who knew how to appeal more effectively to the sympathies of a Christian people. Thus it was that, during the progress of the controversy, all the resolutions proposed by the advocates of orthodoxy were carried by decisive majorities. The Unitarians were boldly met and completely vanquished on the field of argument. So crushing was their discomfiture, that even in the capital of Ulster, which before had been their stronghold, their cause received a shock from which it is never likely to recover. The few small societies under the care of what is called "the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster," proclaim the shrivelled and sickly condition of Irish Unitarianism, as the Sabbath attendance of all united would not amount to that of two or three of the more flourishing orthodox congregations.

The popularity enjoyed at this period by the pastor of Killileagh was such as perhaps has never been attained by any other minister of any denomination in this country. He was universally regarded as the chief agent in effecting the Unitarian secession; his celebrity, as an orator, was not limited to the land of

his birth ; and, wherever he appeared, either in the pulpit or on the platform, he was sure to attract an overflowing audience. Towards the end of the year 1829, he was installed as minister of a congregation recently established in Belfast, and when he preached at the opening of the church of May Street, so many were anxious to be present, that multitudes could not obtain admission into that beautiful and spacious edifice. A grateful Presbyterian people honoured him for the courage and constancy with which he had witnessed against Arianism, and, at the termination of the struggle, were prepared joyfully to exclaim, "Thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel."<sup>33</sup>

The synod of Ulster immediately experienced the happy effects of the withdrawal of the Unitarians. Its annual meeting at Omagh, in 1830, was remarkable, as well for its devotional character as for the harmony which pervaded its deliberations. The amount of business brought before it was considerable, but it was all disposed of satisfactorily within five days, though on each of these days, except the last, it had employed a session in religious exercises, and had listened to a lengthened discourse. The inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood of Omagh took a deep interest in these devotional services, and the entire proceedings produced upon the public mind a most healthful impression.

By the withdrawal of the Rev. William Porter from the synod, the clerkship became vacant, and, at Omagh, the Rev. James Seaton Reid of Carrickfergus was unanimously appointed to the office. Though still a junior minister, Mr. Reid had already filled the moderator's chair, and, at the exciting synod of Strabane, had presided with great firmness, ability, and dignity. He was admirably fitted for the post which he was now selected to occupy, as he was a model of punctuality and order ; whilst his clear judgment, his exact knowledge of the forms of ecclesiastical procedure, and his minute acquaintance with the history of the Church, often enabled him to guide the court in cases of impor-

<sup>33</sup> About this time, he received the degree of D.D. from Jefferson College, United States. The University of Dublin subsequently presented him with the degree of LL.D. ; and his antagonist, Mr. Montgomery, received from the University of Glasgow the same academic distinction.

tance and of difficulty. From this period, he was entrusted with the management of a large share of the public business of the synod; and when it was found necessary to appoint a deputation to wait either on private individuals of distinction, or corporate bodies, or ministers of state, he was almost uniformly chosen as one of its representatives. So long as he remained connected with the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, he possessed much influence in its councils, and on many occasions, by his advice, as well as by his personal exertions, he contributed greatly to the advancement of its interests.

The wretched condition of the places of Presbyterian worship throughout Ulster, about the commencement of the present century, afforded melancholy evidence of the general apathy of both ministers and people. As religion revived, there was a growing improvement in the appearance of the ecclesiastical edifices. In some cases, the old buildings were superseded by others at once more tasteful and more comfortable. But from the year 1827, when the General Synod entered in right earnest on a course of aggressive policy against Arianism, the contributions towards the erection and repair of churches far exceeded what had ever been raised at any preceding period. It appeared, from returns furnished to the clerk in 1837, that, during the previous ten years, one hundred and seventy congregations had expended £107,000 in erecting and repairing their places of worship.<sup>34</sup> The progress made in the work of church extension was equally striking. Within twelve months after the adoption of the overtures in 1828, no less than eleven new congregations sprung up in the synod, and, in the ten years immediately following the Arian separation, the growth of the body was greater than it had been during the century preceding. From 1729 to 1829, the synod added only about seventy-three to the number of its congregations; from 1830 to 1840, no less than eighty-three congregations were erected. Such, too, was the advance-

<sup>34</sup> Minutes of Synod for 1837, p. 49. At this time the congregations of the synod amounted to 264, so that this statement gives an inadequate idea of the whole amount expended, as no returns had been made by ninety-four congregations.



ing regard for religious ordinances, on the part of the mass of the population, that whilst these new establishments were making their appearance, the Sabbath attendance in the previously existing churches often continued to increase.

The progressive improvement in the system of education for students of divinity is one of the most remarkable features in the history of the changes which followed the Arian secession. In 1830, the synod of Ulster had only one professor, and he was expected, in two sessions of six months each, to discuss the various departments of theology. In 1835, Mr. Samuel Davidson<sup>35</sup> was chosen to conduct the newly instituted class of Biblical criticism. In 1837, the Rev. Dr. J. S. Reid<sup>36</sup> was appointed to lecture on ecclesiastical history and pastoral theology. Thus, in a period of seven years, the number of professors was trebled, and several new and important subjects introduced into the scheme of instruction. In 1840, the synod contemplated a still farther improvement of the course, by the addition of another session to the theological curriculum.

Immediately after the Unitarian secession, the synod of Ulster engaged with renovated zeal in the support of missions. In 1826, what was called "The Synod of Ulster Home Mission Society" was instituted; but, after languishing for some time, it became, in 1829, virtually extinct. At the annual meeting of the body in 1830, the "Presbyterian Missionary Society" was

<sup>35</sup> Now Dr. Davidson of Lancashire Independent College.

<sup>36</sup> Dr. Reid, the author of the greater portion of the preceding history, was a native of Lurgan, and was the twenty-first child of his parents. On the 20th of July 1819, he was ordained minister of Donegore, from which he removed to Carrickfergus in 1823. In 1827, he was unanimously chosen moderator of the synod of Ulster, and in 1830, as stated in the text, was appointed its clerk. In 1838, when chosen professor of ecclesiastical history, he resigned the charge of the congregation of Carrickfergus, and removed to Belfast. In April 1841, he was nominated by the crown professor of ecclesiastical and civil history in the University of Glasgow. On Wednesday, the 26th of March 1851, he died at Belmont, the seat of Lord Mackenzie, near Edinburgh, after an illness of about two months' duration, in the fifty-third year of his age. In consideration of his valuable contributions to literature, the crown, since his death, has settled a pension of £100 per annum on his family.

formed. Its great object was "the revival and extension of vital religion, especially among Presbyterians in Ireland," by disseminating the pure principles of the Gospel through the medium of faithful and active agents.<sup>37</sup> In 1831, its receipts were only £78, but, in 1836, they amounted to upwards of £1200 per annum. In September 1833, the synod assembled in the capital of Ireland, for the special purpose of considering the best means of carrying forward and extending its missionary operations; and at this meeting the presbytery of Dublin was instructed to prepare a plan for the formation of a foreign missionary society. From that period, the subject of the extension of the Gospel at home and abroad occupied a prominent place in the deliberations of the supreme judicatory.

No member of the General Synod had a greater share in fostering this missionary spirit than the Rev. James Morgan, minister of the church of Fisherwick Place, Belfast. About four years after his ordination in Carlow, Mr. Morgan removed to Lisburn, where he was installed on the 23d of June 1824. Long prior to this period, the orthodox Presbyterians of Belfast had felt greatly the want of church accommodation, as the meeting-house of Rosemary Street was the only place of worship connected with the synod of Ulster in the town which enjoyed an evangelical ministry.<sup>38</sup> At a special meeting held in Moneymore, in December 1823, the synod agreed to sanction the erection of a new meeting-house, but several years elapsed before the edifice was ready for the accommodation of the worshippers. When it was at length opened, it did not disappoint the expectations of the public, as, in point of capacity and comfort, it stood, perhaps, unrivalled among the ecclesiastical buildings of Ulster. The newly-erected congregation invited Mr. Morgan to become their pastor, and, on the 4th of November 1828, he was installed as

<sup>37</sup> Minutes of Synod for 1830, p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> In 1823, there were, in the town of Belfast and its immediate vicinity, only three Old-Light meeting-houses connected with the synod of Ulster and the secession. There are now (1853) eighteen connected with the united Church. Dr. Morgan has greatly contributed to this work of Church extension.

the minister of Fisherwick Place. His settlement in Belfast forms a new era in its religious history. A considerable number of families, formerly connected with the presbytery of Antrim, were soon attracted to his ministry; clergymen, as well as members of the Episcopal establishment, were often to be seen among his auditors; and his capacious church was speedily filled with an attentive congregation. A spirit of seriousness was diffused throughout society to an extent unknown before, and in not a few instances a love for the frivolities of fashionable life was superseded by a zeal for the advancement of schemes of Christian benevolence. The meeting-house of Fisherwick Place was the resort of strangers visiting the capital of Ulster; the good order of the congregation, and the sound and savoury teaching of the pastor, were reported all over the province; and the munificence of their contributions to the missionary cause awakened and stimulated a spirit of Christian liberality. At present, the sums raised annually in this single church, towards the support of the Gospel, are more than treble the amount originally given by Charles II. towards the maintenance of all the Presbyterian ministers in Ireland.<sup>39</sup>

In October 1831, the Right Honourable E. G. Stanley, the secretary for Ireland, announced, in a letter to the Duke of Leinster, the determination of the government to constitute a board, of which his grace was to be president, for the superintendence of a system of national education. In this communication, it was intimated that the commissioners to be chosen were not to sanction the reading of the Scriptures in their schools by all classes of their pupils, that they were "to encourage" the clergy of all denominations to give instruction in the school-rooms to the children of their respective persuasions, and that the masters were

<sup>39</sup> The church and the buildings connected with it were erected at an expense of about £10,000. From a return made to the presbytery of Belfast, at a visitation of this congregation, held in May 1852, it appeared that the seat-rents alone, for the year preceding, amounted to upwards of £600. Its regular missionary contributions for the same period amounted to £654, 16s. 2½d., and, during the same year, its donations to other religious objects exceeded £1000.

to keep a registry of "the attendance or non-attendance of each child on Divine worship on Sundays." This letter no sooner appeared than the scheme which it promulgated was denounced by a large portion of the Protestant public in terms of unmeasured indignation. The synod of Ulster, at a meeting specially convened in January 1832, agreed to protest against its establishment. At this time the lord-lieutenant had appointed the Rev. James Carlile of Dublin one of the commissioners,<sup>40</sup> and had not the synod possessed the utmost confidence in the piety, sagacity, and single-mindedness of the minister of Mary's Abbey, his acceptance of the office would probably have subjected him to a process of ecclesiastical discipline. Soon afterwards, however, some of the arrangements described in Mr. Stanley's letter were formally relinquished, and others were so modified as to be rendered less objectionable. Almost from the very first, an impression prevailed throughout the synod that, in some respects, the new plan possessed advantages such as no other previous system had presented, and that the Church should use the utmost efforts to obtain such a relaxation of certain regulations as would enable it consistently to avail itself of the aid of the government commissioners. When the synod held its annual meeting in Cookstown in 1833, many hoped that all difficulties, in the way of a satisfactory settlement, were on the eve of a removal. The synod then unanimously agreed to submit certain propositions<sup>41</sup> to govern-

<sup>40</sup> The excellence of the school-books sanctioned by the National Board is admitted by all who are competent to bear an impartial testimony, and it should be known that Dr. Carlile had a principal share in their compilation.

<sup>41</sup> The following were the four propositions :—

"I. That the ministers and people of this Church, without the necessary concurrence of the ministers or members of any other Church, shall enjoy the right of applying to the Board of Education for aid to schools, by a statement of the constitution and regulations of the schools, accompanied with an engagement to adhere to them; but, in this proposition, we recognise the right of the board to consider the regulations and decide accordingly.

"II. That it shall be the right of all parents to require of patrons and managers of schools to set apart, for reading the Holy Scriptures, a convenient and sufficient portion of the stated school-hours, and to direct the master, or some other whom the parents may appoint and provide, to superintend the reading.



ment as the basis of an agreement, and it was confidently expected that these terms would have speedily received an official ratification. In 1834, at the annual meeting in Londonderry, when a committee appointed to confer with his majesty's ministers gave in their report, it appeared that their negotiations had closed unsatisfactorily; but as many members thought that government had really conceded all that was essential, this diversity of sentiment led to an animated discussion. A motion, that the ministers and people of the Church might now apply "for aid out of the funds for national education, strictly adhering to the propositions which were agreed upon at the last meeting of synod," was met by an amendment, stating that "the original system remained unchanged," and pledging the synod to renew "its exhortation to the ministers and elders of the body to refrain from connecting themselves with the Board." This amendment, though supported by the influence and eloquence of Dr. Cooke, was carried by a very narrow majority.<sup>42</sup> The question of national education now continued for some years to keep up in the public mind a most unhappy irritation, but at length, in January 1840, the synod obtained such modifications of the system as enabled it to accept assistance from the funds provided by the legislature.<sup>43</sup>

"III. That all children, whose parents and guardians so direct, shall daily read the Holy Scriptures during the period appointed; but that no compulsion whatever be employed to induce others either to read, or remain during the reading.

"IV. That every use of school-rooms be vested in the local patrons or committees, subject, in case of abuse, to the cognisance of the board.

<sup>42</sup> The majority of the ministers voted against it. The numbers were eighty-one to seventy-four; fifty-six ministers and twenty-five elders voting *for*, and sixty-two ministers and twelve elders voting *against* it.

<sup>43</sup> Shortly after the commencement of this controversy, a census of the various religious denominations was taken by order of government. According to the First Report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction, the population of Ireland in 1834 stood thus:—

Members of the Established Church, . . . . .	852,064
Roman Catholics, . . . . .	6,427,712
Presbyterians, . . . . .	612,356
Other Protestant Dissenters, . . . . .	21,808

It is well known, that whilst this census exaggerates the numbers of the

In the meantime, various events were preparing for arrangements calculated to consolidate the strength of Irish Presbyte-

Established Church, it underrates the Presbyterians ; and it is probable that, in 1834, the Episcopalians were less, by *at least* 150,000, than the amount returned. That so large a deduction should be made may appear from the following considerations :—I. The commissioners state that, “in a large number of parishes,” they have returned the Protestants of the Established Church “on the authority of censuses *made for the occasion by their own clergymen.*” (“Report,” p. 6.) They add, indeed, that these returns were “carefully investigated at the local inquiry held by the visiting commissioners ;” but parties deeply interested often received no notice of the investigation, and the census being made by “parishes according to the present ecclesiastical division of the Established Church,” it was frequently impossible for the ministers of other denominations, even when present, to challenge inaccuracies, as the boundaries of their congregations very rarely coincided with the boundaries of these parishes. The clergy of the establishment enumerated as Episcopalians all not strictly in communion with other denominations, and thus augmented their numbers by enrolling thousands who really made no religious profession whatever. They also took credit for many who, though really belonging to other sects, occasionally attended their ministrations. The census of 1834 being a return made, to a great extent, by themselves, and so drawn up that the ministers of other Churches were not in a position to check it, cannot be received as impartial. II. Every effort was made on the occasion to swell the numbers of the Episcopalians. The commissioners state in their report that “the census of the members of the Established Church includes a considerable number of Wesleyan Methodists who wished to be classed as members of that body.” (Page 5.) It would appear that there were in Ireland at the time upwards of 43,000 persons in fellowship with the Methodists ; and as many, who are not actual members, are entirely dependent upon that denomination for religious instruction, it may safely be affirmed that, by this piece of accommodating policy, nearly 100,000 individuals, who really differed from the Established Church in doctrine, discipline, and worship, were added to the roll of its nominal adherents. The report supplies internal evidence that the Methodists were not the only dissenters who passed muster as belonging to the establishment, for in several instances Baptists and Independents appear to have been anxious to oblige after the same fashion. (See Diocese of Kildare, Naas, 20 *b*, and 21 *b* ; Diocese of Leighlin, Maryborough, 46 *b*, and 47 *b* ; Diocese of Ferns, 76 *b*, and 77 *b*.) What is still more extraordinary, even the Quakers seem to have been forced into the establishment. Thus the report notices, in the *city of Limerick*, an Independent meeting-house with an average attendance of “about 200,” and a Quaker meeting-house also with an average attendance of “about 200 ;” and yet *the whole diocese of Limerick*, in addition to Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, and Presbyterians, is represented as containing

rianism. The Unitarians had scarcely left the synod when, at the Cookstown meeting in August 1829, Mr. John Brown of Agha-

only 191 individuals of all other Protestant denominations ! (See also as remarkable a case in the Diocese of Leighlin, Fenagh, 38 *b*, and 39 *b* ; also, Diocese of Ferns, Taghmon, 78 *b*, and 79 *b*.) Other things equally extraordinary appear in this report. It states that, in the diocese of Clogher, there were thirty places of worship for "other Protestant dissenters," and yet that these dissenters amounted only to twenty-six individuals ! In the diocese of Ardagh, there were nine places of worship for twelve Protestant dissenters ; in the diocese of Ross, two places of worship for two Protestant dissenters ; and in the diocese of Clonfert, four places of worship for three Protestant dissenters ! Nonconformists are not in the habit of erecting meeting-houses where there are no congregations, but on this emergency they lent their names to the Established Church. III. In this census many Presbyterians are reckoned as Episcopalians. In not a few instances the enumerators simply asked whether the parties visited were *Protestants* or Roman Catholics (see chapter xx., note 57), and they put down as members of the Established Church all who called themselves Protestants. There is no doubt that many thousands of Presbyterians were in this way placed to the credit of the establishment. Thus it would appear, from the report of the commissioners, that in 1834 there were no Presbyterians in the parish of Drummully, diocese of Clogher (see Report, Province of Armagh, p. 14 *a*), though a considerable number of families connected with the Presbyterian congregation of Ballyhobridge resided there. In Athlone, diocese of Meath, the enumerator could find no Presbyterians (see Report, Province of Armagh, p. 70 *a*), though they were so numerous that a Presbyterian congregation was erected there by the synod of Ulster in the year following. In Balisakerry, county Mayo, the report admits the existence of a Presbyterian meeting-house, with a Sabbath attendance of ninety as the average congregation, and yet ignores the existence of so much as a single Presbyterian in the parish ! Here, even the Presbyterian minister and his family appear to have been reckoned among the members of the Established Church. (See Diocese of Killala, pp. 52 *d*, and 53 *d*.) It is certain that, at this very time, there were about three hundred persons connected with this single congregation, and yet the report only recognises thirty-eight Presbyterians in the whole diocese of Killala. The Presbyterian congregation of Ballyshannon has existed for generations, and reckons amongst its members some of the most respectable families in the town and neighbourhood. At the time of the census, the people had just completed the erection of a new meeting-house, the old one having become dilapidated ; but the enumerator could not find even one Presbyterian in the whole parish ! (See Kilbarron, Diocese of Raphoe, p. 274 *a*.) In these and other instances, large numbers of Presbyterians, sometimes including entire congregations, were reckoned as belonging to the Established Church. It was not singular that the synod of Ulster,

doey<sup>44</sup> gave notice of his intention to move that subscription to the Confession of Faith should be required of all candidates for license or ordination. Though the overtures of 1828 secured an adherence to the great doctrines set forth in the Westminster formularies, they did not insist upon subscription, and Mr. Brown conceived that, so long as this point was unsettled, the triumph of evangelism was incomplete. In the Arian controversy, he had rendered good service to the orthodox cause, and now, in the face of no small array of difficulties, he continued, year after year, to press his proposition. In 1832, his perseverance partially prevailed, as the synod then adopted an overture, to the effect, that candidates for license or ordination should be called on to subscribe in the terms of a certain authorised formula; but that should they scruple to employ any particular phrase in the

in the year 1835, complained of the inaccuracy of this census. See Minutes for that year, p. 72.

Those who will candidly consider the circumstances under which the census of 1834 was taken, will probably admit that at least *one-tenth* of those placed to the credit of the Established Church should have been returned as Presbyterians. At a very moderate estimate, 75,000 besides should have been classed as Methodists or other Protestant dissenters. The census of 1834 modified upon these principles would stand thus:—

Members of the Established Church, . . . . .	691,858
Roman Catholics, . . . . .	6,427,712
Presbyterians, . . . . .	727,562
Methodists and other Protestant dissenters, . . . . .	96,808

As comparatively few of the Presbyterians are in circumstances of very great destitution, they have suffered less comparatively by the famine than either Episcopalians or Romanists. Making due allowance for the conversions to Protestantism which have taken place, the population at present probably stands nearly thus:—

Members of the Established Church, . . . . .	659,000
Roman Catholics, . . . . .	5,070,600
Presbyterians, . . . . .	700,000
Methodists and other Protestant dissenters, . . . . .	80,000

<sup>44</sup> Mr. Brown was ordained minister of Aghadoey, December 14, 1813. In 1832, he was chosen moderator of the synod of Ulster, and in that year received the thanks of the body for his successful efforts to obtain bounty for a large number of previously unendowed congregations. In 1839, he received the degree of D.D. from the University of Edinburgh.



confession, they should be at liberty to give in to the synod a written explanation of their sentiments, and that should this be found neither subversive of the analogy of faith, nor inconsistent with the true spirit of the doctrine of the creed, they should not be rejected. It was soon discovered that this rule was likely to prove exceedingly embarrassing, and that the peace of the Church could only be preserved by a return to the original practice of absolute subscription. At an adjourned meeting, held in Cookstown in 1835, the synod accordingly agreed to a declaratory overture, announcing a determination to receive in future no exceptions or explanations, and to require all about to become licentiates or ministers to sign the prescribed formula. At a special meeting assembled in Cookstown, on Tuesday, the 9th of August in the following year, this overture was again considered, when, after a discussion of great length, the synod, by a large majority, agreed to its confirmation. On this occasion, the eighth session of the court continued during the entire night; and when the roll was called, at five o'clock on the morning of Friday, ninety-four ministers and thirty-one elders voted "confirm," and twenty ministers and eight elders voted "not."

By returning to the practice of unqualified subscription, the synod, in as far as ecclesiastical arrangements could avail, completed its doctrinal reformation. This measure was quickly followed by a renewal of communion with the Church of Scotland. During the latter part of the preceding century, there had been very little intercourse between the synod and the mother Church, and, in 1799, the General Assembly passed a law, which had the effect of excluding Irish Presbyterian ministers from the pulpits of the Scottish establishment.<sup>45</sup> In 1818, the Unitarian party

<sup>45</sup> The visit of the Rev. Rowland Hill to Scotland in 1798 led the moderate party to pass this act. It declared that all licenses granted to probationers without its own bounds were invalid, that presentations given to such probationers must be refused, and that its ministers must not, upon any occasion, employ to preach, or to dispense any of the ordinances of the Gospel, persons not qualified to accept a presentation. (See Hetherington's "History of the Church of Scotland." Seventh edition, vol. ii. p. 361.) For an account of a correspondence between the Scottish General Assembly and the Synod of

induced the synod, in retaliation, to adopt a resolution, declaring that the ministers and licentiates of the Church of Scotland should not be admitted to preach in any of its congregations; but, in the following year, this regulation was so far modified, that they were merely interdicted from officiating in its vacancies, and pronounced ineligible as candidates for its pastoral charges. Shortly afterwards, a more kindly feeling began to spring up between the Churches, and, about the period before us, both parties became desirous for the renewal of ministerial intercourse. In August 1835, the synod removed the great difficulty by passing the declaratory overture in favour of unqualified subscription, so that, in the following May, the General Assembly unanimously agreed to readmit its members to ministerial fellowship. A correspondence, which was kept up with great cordiality on both sides, now commenced between the two Churches.

By the confirmation of the overture requiring absolute subscription to the Confession of Faith, the principal barrier in the way of another, and a still closer, ecclesiastical alliance was completely removed. The General Synod was thus almost entirely assimilated to the Irish Secession Church, and no good reason could be assigned why the two bodies should not be incorporated. An arrangement relative to the *Regium Donum*, made in 1838, obviated several minor objections which might have delayed the consummation of the union. In that year government agreed to equalise the bounty, and, on certain conditions, to grant £75, late Irish currency, per annum to every minister connected with the two synods.<sup>46</sup> Being now placed on an equal footing by the

Ulster relative to ministerial communion in 1815 and 1817, see the *Presbyterian Review* for March 1835, vol. vi. pp. 319, 320.

<sup>46</sup> On the report of a committee of the House of Commons, in 1831, an important change was made in regard to the *Regium Donum*, as the various payments out of the civil list were then all cancelled, and the gross sum provided for in the Irish miscellaneous estimates of the year. Thus the whole amount is at present obtained by an annual vote, and part of the grant is not, as formerly, to a certain extent, beyond the reach of the attacks of the Voluntaries of the House of Commons. (See chapter xxii., note 25, and the text.) In justice to the Irish Presbyterian Church, the *Regium Donum* should be otherwise secured. The whole amount voted by the

state, as well as one in doctrine and in polity, they had very few difficulties to surmount when they proceeded to settle the terms of an agreement.

It is an interesting fact, that the first very decided movement in favour of the union was made by the candidates for the ministry in attendance on the collegiate classes connected with the Belfast Academical Institution. The students under the care of the two Churches had established among themselves a united prayer-meeting; and, in the spring of 1839, they invited the Rev. John Coulter of Gilnahirk to state to them his views as to the propriety of a coalescence of their respective denominations. His excellent and appropriate address, which was immediately published, soon obtained wide circulation, and the arguments which it urged in support of the proposed measure at once commended themselves to an intelligent community. The public mind was, in fact, quite prepared for the appeal. The Rev. Dr. Edgar<sup>47</sup> of Belfast, professor of divinity for the Secession Synod,

House of Commons in 1852 to Irish nonconforming ministers was £38,560. Of this the Unitarians received about £3500. In 1840, the government adopted a regulation, to the effect that no bounty would be issued in any case unless at the very least £35 of stipend were paid yearly to the minister. Of this sum £20 must be paid by the congregation, and the balance may be made up by a free manse, or a permanent bequest, or a donation. The mode in which Irish Presbyterian ministers are paid involves a species of compromise between the voluntary and establishment systems, and apparently suggests the true solution of a vexed question. They are supported partly by the state and partly by the people. Under the Mosaic economy, the ministers of the sanctuary were maintained in much the same way, as, in addition to a fixed endowment in houses and lands, they were entitled to a share of the oblations of the worshippers.

<sup>47</sup> The Rev. John Edgar was ordained minister of a Secession congregation recently erected in Belfast on the 14th of November 1820, and, in 1826, succeeded his father as professor of divinity for the Secession Synod. Since the union of the two synods, he has signalised himself as the father of the Connaught mission, and the founder of the industrial schools which have already proved of such advantage to the West of Ireland. His labours in the temperance cause are thus noticed in a late publication:—"Dr. Edgar has written about eighty works of various sizes on temperance, nearly all of which have been frequently republished in different parts of the United Kingdom and of America; and they are in circulation in all parts of the world; and,

was already known as one of the most efficient ministers of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Whilst his generous advocacy of schemes for the diffusion of the Gospel had tended greatly to foster a missionary spirit in the Secession Church, his efforts in the cause of female purity and of slave emancipation had attracted the favourable notice of good men of all denominations ; and whilst his fidelity and firmness in the assertion of ecclesiastical discipline had given him a title to the confidence of the friends of Presbyterian order, his energy and eloquence, as the father of the Irish temperance reformation, had earned for him the gratitude and admiration of thousands and tens of thousands, embracing all ranks of his countrymen. The ministers and people of the synod of Ulster were most anxious that he and others of his brethren should be more closely associated with themselves, and the members of the secession body, on their part, were equally desirous of an alliance with the General Synod. Parties so well disposed for a coalition could not long remain separated. Memorials, expressing a desire for union, from the students of the two denominations, from the elders and people of several congregations throughout Ulster, and from a public meeting, consisting of members of the various churches of Belfast connected with the two bodies, were presented to the synod of Ulster and the Secession synod, assembled respectively in June and July 1839. Each body, in consequence, appointed a committee to consider the practicability of the measure ; to confer, if necessary, with a committee of the other Church ; and, if deemed expedient, to call a special meeting of the synod, and report to it the result. The committees of the two synods met in Fisherwick Place church, Belfast, on the 28th of the following August, and arranged, in a

besides keeping his great subject continually before the public eye in various periodicals, he edited the *Belfast Temperance Advocate*, and for a length of time the periodical of the British and Foreign Temperance Society. Wherever invited, whether in England, Ireland, or Scotland, he went to advocate the cause ; and in London, Dublin, Glasgow, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds, York, and very many other places, he has repeatedly addressed immense multitudes from the platform and the pulpit ; and twelve years of the best of his life [from 1829 to 1841] have been sedulously and gratuitously devoted to the cause." Hall's "Ireland," vol. iii. pp. 60, 61, note.



most fraternal spirit, the preliminaries of a union. On Wednesday, the 8th of April 1840, the two synods held special meetings in Belfast, and agreed, in their separate judicatories, to all the more important terms of incorporation. On Friday they terminated their proceedings by joining together in devotional exercises. "This day," says a spectator, "will be long remembered for the hallowing tone which it imparted to the minds of all present. The universal feeling during the whole meeting, especially during the concluding prayer, was that of high devotion. All seemed to be lifted up above the earth, with its distracting and dividing passions, and to breathe a purer atmosphere—the atmosphere of heaven."<sup>48</sup>

On Wednesday, the 20th, and Thursday, the 21st of May, the committees of the two synods met together in Fisherwick Place session-room, to arrange some minor details which still remained unsettled. Their business was adjusted without difficulty, and it was agreed that the union should be consummated in the following July. On Tuesday, the 7th of that month, the two synods commenced their sittings in Belfast; the Synod of Ulster, meeting in the church of May Street, and the Secession Synod in the church of Linen-Hall Street. After having transacted some other business, and sanctioned the resolutions which the joint committees had adopted in the May preceding, they proceeded, on Friday, the 10th of July 1840, to the final act of incorporation. At eleven o'clock on the morning of that day they set out from their respective places of meeting, and then, mingling in one body on the way, walked together in procession, through a dense crowd of spectators, to the church of Rosemary Street. The moderators of the two synods, the Rev. James Elder of Finvoy, and the Rev. John Rogers of Glascar, headed the procession. Having reached the place of destination, accompanied by an immense multitude, these two venerable ministers then proceeded to the pulpit, and conducted devotional exercises. Immediately afterwards, the Rev. Dr. James Seaton Reid read, in a very deliberate mannér, the act of union;<sup>49</sup> and, as soon as he

<sup>48</sup> "Orthodox Presbyterian" for May 1840.

<sup>49</sup> The following is the act of union, as extracted from the Minutes of the first

had concluded, all the ministers and elders present rose from their seats, and held up their right hands in token of approval. The Rev. Dr. Hanna was now unanimously chosen moderator, and the court was regularly constituted, under the title of "The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland." A

General Assembly :—"Whereas, above two centuries ago, extensive colonies of Presbyterian settlers from Scotland and elsewhere were planted in Ireland, whose ministers and elders afterwards formed themselves into an ecclesiastical body, holding the standards and adopting the discipline of the parent Church of Scotland ; which ecclesiastical body was for a time designated 'The Presbytery of Ulster,' and subsequently received, and has ever since been known by, the name and designation of 'The General Synod of Ulster.' And whereas, about a century ago, another Presbyterian body, being a branch of the Secession Church in Scotland, likewise holding the standards and adopting the discipline of the Church of Scotland, but seceding from the jurisdiction of that Church, was introduced into Ireland ; which last-mentioned body, being for a time divided into two synods, bearing the designation of 'The Associate Synod of Ireland,' and 'The Associate Synod of Ireland in subordination to the General Associate Synod of Scotland,' respectively, subsequently united into one synod, which has been, and is now known by the name of "The Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, distinguished by the name of Seceders." And whereas it hath pleased Almighty God, in his merciful providence, to remove the causes of difference and alienation hitherto unhappily subsisting between the said General Synod of Ulster and the said Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, distinguished by the name of Seceders, and to dispose these two Churches to unite under the same standards, as aforesaid, as founded upon and agreeable to the Word of God, in Christian communion and fellowship, as one ecclesiastical body under the Great Head of the Church. And whereas it has been severally agreed by the said Churches, in synod duly assembled, to constitute themselves, as aforesaid, into one Church, in the manner and under the designation hereinafter mentioned.

"It is hereby accordingly resolved and agreed upon, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Head of the Church, by the said General Synod of Ulster and the said Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, distinguished by the name of Seceders, on this the 10th day of July, in the year of our Lord 1840, duly assembled together, that they do now, and in all times hereafter shall, constitute one united Church, professing the same common faith, as set forth in the standards as aforesaid ; and, in all matters ecclesiastical, exercising, and subject to, the same government and discipline ; each nevertheless retaining and reserving, in respect of any temporalities belonging thereto, or to the several congregations respectively under its care, or to any persons in trust for them or any of them, all civil rights, interests, and estates whatever, in

deputation, consisting of the Rev. Patrick Macfarlane of Greenock, the Rev. James Begg of Libberton, the Rev. Robert M. M'Cheyne of Dundee, and David Maitland Makgill Crichton, Esq., of Ranneillur, was then introduced; and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, through the medium of these representatives, congratulated the united body on the happy event which had just occurred. The Rev. James Morgan now presented to the assembly the Rev. James Glasgow of Castledawson, and the Rev. Alexander Kerr of Portadown, as brethren who had been selected to proceed as missionaries to India, and who had consented to undertake the appointment. The assembly ratified the arrangement, and the moderator, after having solemnly set apart these two ministers by prayer to the service of the heathen, proceeded to deliver to them a faithful and affectionate address.

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Such was the first session of the first meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The names of Burgher and Antiburgher had already been well nigh forgotten,

as full and ample a manner, to all intents and purposes whatsoever, as if the said union of these Churches had not taken place, to and for the same uses, and upon the same trusts respectively, as heretofore in any wise are or have been expressed or declared of or concerning the same.

“And it is hereby farther resolved and agreed upon, as aforesaid, that the said united Church, so constituted, shall henceforth bear the name and designation of ‘The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, consisting of the General Synod of Ulster and the Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, distinguished by the name of Seceders,’ and that its supreme court shall be styled ‘The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.’

“And it is hereby farther resolved and agreed upon, that, notwithstanding said union, the two synods, as aforesaid, shall reserve, and they do hereby reserve, to themselves and to the ministers and elders of the congregations under their care respectively, and to the successors of such ministers and elders, for the time being, the right of meeting hereafter in synod, but only concerning such temporalities as aforesaid, as distinct bodies, with the necessary officers, as heretofore, as such General Synod of Ulster and such Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, distinguished by the name of Seceders, from time to time, as occasion may require, with full power to make all arrangements, and to do and perform all proper, legal, and equitable acts necessary to protect and preserve all their separate rights, interests, and estates as aforesaid.”

and now the distinctions of Synod of Ulster and Secession were buried in a common grave. Scarcely two hundred years before, five ministers had met, at a few miles distance from Belfast, to constitute the first Irish presbytery; now the thirty-three presbyteries, into which the new Assembly was divided, supplied evidence that the Church had taken root and covered the land. Scarcely a century before, the first associate missionary had appeared in Ulster; now one hundred and forty-one Seceding congregations became connected with the united body.<sup>50</sup> At this period the congregations of the synod of Ulster amounted to two hundred and ninety-two, so that the new Assembly had, in all, under its care four hundred and thirty-three congregations.

The union diffused joy throughout the whole Presbyterian population, and the pious observer did not fail to recognise the favour of God in the unanimity and right feeling which pervaded the various meetings preparatory to its consummation. The facility with which it was accomplished excited the devout wonder even of those entrusted with the drawing up of the articles of settlement, as it scarcely could have been anticipated that prejudices, which had been gathering strength for the greater portion of a century, would have been so easily and so completely overcome. When the parties met together to hold their first session in the church of Rosemary Street, many were deeply moved, and the whole scene was intensely interesting. Christian charity was celebrating a noble triumph, and Ulster had never before witnessed such a demonstration of the unity and strength of orthodox Presbyterianism.

The Assembly at once assumed a position which neither of the bodies of which it was constituted would have been able to occupy. The Irish Presbyterian Church had long been greatly weakened by the mutual jealousies of the Secession and the Synod of Ulster, but it now acquired a new degree even of political consideration. In the great struggle which preceded the

<sup>50</sup> Six or seven ministers and their congregations, connected with the Secession Synod, refused to accede to the union. These malcontents formed themselves into a separate body, which has since attracted very little public attention.



disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843, it warmly espoused the cause of the non-intrusionists ; and though its appeals to the legislature in their behalf were unsuccessful, the importance of its interference was felt and acknowledged. About the same time an attempt was made to prevent Irish Presbyterian ministers from uniting members of their own Church in wedlock with those of the Episcopal establishment, and, to the surprise of many, the English judges pronounced such marriages illegal ; but the efforts of the Assembly to procure redress eventually prevailed. Though, in this case, it had to contend against the secret opposition of the High Church party, it obtained, in 1844, from a rather reluctant administration, an act warranting the exercise of the disputed privilege.<sup>51</sup>

Presbyterians have never formed any very considerable portion of the Irish aristocracy, and those among them who have attained high rank have generally evinced a disposition, sooner or later, to pass over into the Church as by law established. It does not appear that this change has added either to the piety or the usefulness of the converts, and it may be doubted whether it has ever conduced eventually even to their worldly prosperity. When New-Light principles were prevalent in the synod of Ulster, it was not strange that opulent families deserted it, as Irish Presbyterianism had then lost much of its vitality ; and though the Established Church at the same time was spiritually dead, it had

<sup>51</sup> See chapter xxix., note 28, and the text. The Established Church of Ireland still enjoys, to a certain extent, a monopoly in the way of the celebration of marriage. A Presbyterian minister can legally celebrate a marriage only where at least one of the parties belongs to his own denomination. A minister of the Episcopal Church can perform the ceremony where both the parties are Presbyterians or Romanists, and no minister, not connected with the establishment, can legally marry an Episcopalian and a Romanist. It thus happens that the amount of the Episcopal population cannot be at all estimated from the number of marriages celebrated in Ireland according to the rites of the Established Church. Though the Presbyterian population of Ulster exceeds the Episcopal population, in the ratio of more than three to two, it appears from the "Third Report of the Registrar-General of Marriages in Ireland," that, in 1851, more marriages were celebrated in the northern province in Episcopal than in Presbyterian churches.

at least the attractions of fashionable society. But the last quarter of a century has witnessed great ecclesiastical as well as political changes. The new Assembly is free from the incubus of Unitarianism; it presents Presbyterianism in a consolidated and invigorated form; its candidates for the ministry receive a collegiate education more extensive than has been hitherto required in Ireland from Protestant ministers of any denomination; and its polity, framed according to the model of primitive times, commends itself to the approval of an age distinguished by its attachment to free institutions. Presbyterians of the upper ranks are now beginning to discover that their social influence, if not higher interests, must suffer by a withdrawal from the Church of their fathers. Recent legislation has immensely strengthened the popular element in the constitution of the country; and it has been ascertained that, other things being equal, a Presbyterian is the favourite candidate with an Ulster constituency.<sup>52</sup> Besides, the spirit of the age is intensely inquisitive, and the time is passing rapidly away when mere fashion will decide religious connections.

The Irish Presbyterian Church has, from time to time, received accessions from the Episcopal establishment, as well as from other denominations, and its numerical strength has never been sensibly affected by secessions from its communion. At the present moment, Presbyterians constitute the bone and sinew of the Irish Protestant population, as they have more general competence, as well as more diffused intelligence, than any other great religious community.<sup>53</sup> For upwards of a century, the stream of emigration has been running strongly in the direction of America,

<sup>52</sup> For many years there was not a single member of the Irish Presbyterian Church in the imperial parliament. Of late, on one or two occasions, a Presbyterian has been returned for Armagh, Belfast, and Coleraine; and the Irish Assembly has at present in the House of Commons a staunch friend, with a good name, in William Kirk, Esq., M.P. for Newry.

<sup>53</sup> In the case of the Irish Presbyterian Church, the prayer of Agur (Prov. xxx. 8)—“Give me neither poverty nor riches”—has been to a great extent fulfilled. Very few of her members possess overgrown wealth, and comparatively few of them are in extreme indigence. The statistics of the work-houses of Ulster very fairly illustrate the social condition of the three leading

and, until of late, the Presbyterians of Ulster were almost the only section of the people of sufficient energy and enterprise to avail themselves of the prospects of advancement presented in the New World; but, notwithstanding this large and continued drain upon their Church, her adherents, as compared with other Protestant sects, still maintain the position which they held, shortly after the Revolution, in the national census.<sup>54</sup> Owing to their

denominations. The three following returns exhibit the state of matters in three different portions of the northern province:—

Number of Paupers in the Belfast Workhouse for the week ending	Episcopalians.	Roman Catholics.	Presbyterians.
29th Jan. 1853, . . . .	651	953	378
In Monaghan Workhouse on 31st Jan. 1853, . . . .	44	283	11
In Londonderry Workhouse on 15th Jan. 1853, . . . .	108	432	63
Total, . . . .	803	1668	452

Supposing that the different denominations now occupy the same comparative position as in 1834—a supposition exceedingly disadvantageous to the Presbyterians, as they have since comparatively increased—and taking the returns of the Commissioners of Public Instruction in their first report as the basis of calculation, though it has been shown that these returns are extremely partial, the present population may be thus estimated:—

Present Population of the Belfast Union, . . . .	Episcopalians.	Roman Catholics.	Presbyterians.
Union, . . . .	32,789	37,154	52,828
Do. Monaghan do., . . . .	8,188	33,378	6,778
Do. Londonderry do., . . . .	9,004	30,850	22,258
Total, . . . .	49,981	101,382	81,864

I have received returns from several other unions in Ulster of less note, all of which exhibit results such as are here presented. These returns, when taken together, represent the amount of pauperism connected with the Established Church and the Romish Church as very nearly the same. According to them, there is one Episcopal pauper for every sixty-two individuals of the Episcopal population; one Roman Catholic pauper for every sixty individuals of the Roman Catholic population; and one Presbyterian pauper for every one hundred and eighty-one individuals of the Presbyterian population. It has often been said that Presbyterianism is not a religion for a gentleman, but the statistics of the Ulster poor-houses rather seem to indicate that it is not a religion for a beggarman.

<sup>54</sup> That this statement is not lightly made may appear from the following

peculiar circumstances, they have suffered less from the recent famine than perhaps almost any other class of religionists. Of late, in various parts of Ulster, as the old gentry of the country have disappeared, Presbyterians, enriched by trade, have been rapidly filling up their places, and, in some instances, prosperous

considerations. In the early part of last century, the Presbyterians do not appear to have amounted to more than one-half of the Protestant population. In an "Apology" addressed by them to Queen Anne, they state that the Test Act, then recently passed, had "placed an odious mark of infamy upon at least the one-half of the Protestants of this kingdom." (See Kirkpatrick's "Presbyterian Loyalty," p. 564.) The High Church party, at that time, refused to admit that the Presbyterians constituted so large a section of the community; and it is not to be thought strange if, under the influence of sectarian prejudice and zeal, they somewhat exaggerated their numbers in the document just quoted. In 1787, the Bishop of Cloyne estimated them as considerably less numerous than the Episcopalians. ("Present State of the Church of Ireland," p. 73. Sixth edition.) It is probable that, in 1834, the numbers of the Episcopalians and Presbyterians were nearly equal. (See note 43 of this chapter.) Since that period the balance has, perhaps, turned considerably in favour of the Presbyterians, as they suffered less comparatively by the famine of 1846 than any other leading denomination. Many who are nominally connected with the Established Church very seldom attend its worship, and still more rarely join in the celebration of the Lord's Supper; and at present there is little doubt but that the *regular communicants* of the Presbyterian Church greatly outnumber those of the establishment. Thus though, according to the census of 1834, the Episcopalian population of Belfast was to the Presbyterian population in the ratio of somewhat more than two to three, it has been ascertained, by actual examination, that the number of individuals who communicated in all the Episcopal churches within the borough, at Christmas last (1852), as compared with the number who partook of the Lord's Supper about the same time in the Presbyterian churches within the same boundary, was in the ratio of less than one to three. The immense patronage so long enjoyed by Episcopacy has replenished the Irish Church, as well with proselytes from other sects as with many immigrants from England; and, until of late, it has scarcely been affected by emigration to America, as its members were either too rich to think of seeking after an improvement of their condition in a foreign country, or too poor to be able to try the experiment. The fact that, under these circumstances, the Irish Presbyterian Church has still been able to keep her place in the Protestant population, is a remarkable proof of her internal vigour. In the New World, her children have laid the foundations of a religious commu-



Presbyterian merchants may be seen occupying the baronial halls of the ancient aristocracy.

Though the members of the Irish Assembly are perfectly agreed in doctrine, they may be expected to differ occasionally as to questions of jurisdiction or of discipline. A case of this kind, which has attracted much public attention, has recently occurred. In 1846, an opulent lady, a member of the Presbyterian Church, died in Dublin, and bequeathed, among other legacies, a sum of £20,000 towards the erection and endowment of a Presbyterian college.<sup>55</sup> The trustees, who had the power, under the will, of fixing the site of the seminary, selected a locality which a large majority of the Assembly considered quite unsuitable. In consequence, one or two of the recent meetings have presented scenes of much excitement, and of somewhat bitter altercation. But no sound reasoner will therefore quarrel with the Presbyterian system of ecclesiastical polity. It is the glory of freemen that they are at liberty to differ, and just in proportion to the depth of their convictions will be the earnestness with which they will press their peculiar sentiments. And should the "contention" become "sharp," it does not follow, after all, that they are utterly destitute of the spirit of Christian brethren.<sup>56</sup> Ecclesiastical strife exhibits the Church in a most ungainly aspect, and as it is always fostered by human ignorance and pride, it is, no doubt, most devoutly to be deprecated. But it is an evil incident to any society constituted according to the Scriptural model, as among ministers, even in the days of the apostles, there occurred sometimes

nity which has risen into importance with almost unexampled rapidity ; and should the American Presbyterian Church continue to prosper, as at present, it will probably be, in another century, by far the most influential in Christendom. The descendants of Irish Presbyterians in the United States are perhaps threefold more numerous than the whole Presbyterian population now in Ireland.

<sup>55</sup> See chapter xxix., note 68. Those who wish to be minutely acquainted with the controversy which this bequest has created, may consult the letters and speeches of the Rev. Richard Dill of Dublin on the one side, and, on the other, "Collegiate Education in Ulster, in a series of Letters," by the Rev. R. Wilson, D.D.

<sup>56</sup> See Acts, xv. 39.

“no small dissension and disputation.”<sup>57</sup> At the bar and in the senate there are, now and then, violent disputes, but no sane man would therefore desire to relinquish the advantages of the British constitution; and better far that, in the courts of the Church, there should be an occasional outburst of ill-regulated feeling, than that its legitimate rulers should be divested of their rights, and compelled to submit in silence to the untold abuses of an ecclesiastical despotism.

The great mass of the Presbyterian population of Ulster still cleave to their Church with unabated attachment. They are too enlightened to regard their pastors with the awe of superstition, and too candid not to admit that they have faults as well as other men; but they honour them, notwithstanding, for their works' sake, and they know how to appreciate the Scriptural doctrines which they preach, and the apostolic ordinances which they administer. Whilst their theology improves the heart, their ecclesiastical arrangements stimulate the intellect; and to be convinced even of the temporal advantages of their peculiar polity, they require only to look abroad upon the face of their own province. Little more than two centuries ago, it was the most barbarous and desolate in the land, now it is the most enlightened and prosperous. And if, in the mysterious providence of God, the time should ever again come when Irish Presbyterians must suffer persecution for their principles, it will, no doubt, be seen that not a few will again submit, for Christ's sake, to the spoiling of their goods, and to the repetition of the tragedies of the martyrs of the covenant.

Never at any former period was the Irish Presbyterian Church in a position so hopeful as that which it at present occupies. The union of the two synods led to a union of some of the smaller congregations previously connected with them, and the famine for a time pressed heavily upon the whole population, but the work of Church extension has continued to make steady progress, as there are now connected with the Assembly five synods, thirty-six presbyteries, four hundred and ninety-one congregations, and five

<sup>57</sup> Acts, xv. 2.

hundred and thirty-three ministers. The united Church has enlarged the number of its missionaries to the heathen, and has established, in addition, a mission to the Jews, a mission to the British colonies, and a mission to the Roman Catholics of Ireland. Though it has yet reached but "the day of small things," it at present raises, for its missions and missionary schools, contributions amounting to about nine thousand pounds sterling per annum.<sup>58</sup> It has improved and enlarged its course of theological instruction for students going forward to the ministry, and it is this year (1853) completing the erection of a Presbyterian college in the capital of Ulster.

If such have been the fruits of a union of Irish Presbyterians, how glorious would be the results of a union of Irish Protestants! Who will say that such a consummation is altogether hopeless? Were the spirit formerly exhibited by Ussher and Bedell to prevail, it might be speedily accomplished. Ancient manuscripts lately brought to light have greatly illustrated the question of Church government, and one recently discovered treatise of the third century, written by a learned minister who resided a few miles from Rome, represents the author as protesting against the attempted usurpations of incipient prelacy, and as asserting the apostolicity of Presbyterianism.<sup>59</sup> As the serious and intelligent members of the Episcopal establishment review the history of Ireland, they may learn important lessons in ecclesiastical polity. They must see that their hierarchy, though supported at vast expense, and though not destitute of men eminent for literature and piety, has done comparatively little to advance the cause of evangelical Protestantism. The recent extinction of ten bishoprics has not impaired the efficiency of the Church, and it must

<sup>58</sup> The exact amount for the year ending July 1852 was £8650, 13s. 4d., but it is confidently expected that the contributions for the current year will considerably exceed £9000.

<sup>59</sup> Hippolytus, the author of the recently discovered treatise "Against all Heresies," was a member of the Roman presbytery, and flourished about the year 225. Chevalier Bunsen, though no friend to the Scottish ecclesiastical polity, is constrained to admit, when expounding the views of this father, that "his ecclesiastical polity may be termed Presbyterianism." See Bunsen's "Hippolytus and his Age," vol. i. p. 307. London, 1852.

now be obvious that the prosperity of religion in no way depends upon the existence of the Episcopal order. Presbyterianism, though often frowned upon by statesmen, and always hampered by its limited resources, has, after all, been the best benefactor of the country. The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland upon a Presbyterian basis would add immensely to its vigour as an ecclesiastical institute. It has already among its clergy a goodly number of the excellent of the earth, but had its people the election of their pastors, and had its pastors liberty to act as the rightful rulers of the house of God, it could adduce, in its free constitution, a new argument of tremendous power against the iron despotism of Popery. Happy the day when Irish Protestants will see eye to eye, and when a reformed and united Church, fitly framed together according to the model of the Word, and inhabited by the living Spirit of the High and the Holy One, will reflect the grace, and truth, and wisdom of the heavenly Architect !

THE END.





APPENDIX TO VOLUME THIRD,  
CONSISTING OF  
ORIGINAL PAPERS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS.

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No. I.

SEE CHAPTER XXIII., FIRST PARAGRAPH.

COPY of a Protestation, with the Reasons against the Overture for Dissolving our annual General Synods, and substituting in their place a Meeting of Delegates. Taken from Wodrow's MSS. in Advocates' Library, Edinburgh. (Rob. iii., 6-12.)

WE subscribers, ministers of the Gospel in the North of Ireland, members of the present Synod met at Derry, June 1st 1709, understanding that an overture is made by some ministers in the name of several presbyteries proposing that our annual general Synods be laid aside and instead thereof a certain number of ministers and elders shall be delegated to meet and empowered to manage the common affairs of this Church which have been formerly treated and determined in our General Synods; and a vote having passed that a committee be appointed by the Synod to draw up a scheme or model of such a meeting of persons delegated to that end: We being apprehensive of the dangerous consequences of such motions, votes and acts as have a tendency to overthrow the present happy constitution of General Synods and by the dissolution of them to bring in other dangerous innovations hitherto happy in its unity order and uniformity;

and being willing and resolved to prevent by all lawful means and oppose whatever may tend to subvert our happy constitution in whole or in part, have at the passing of the aforesaid vote publicly declared our dissent from it and protestation against it in our own names and in the name of all those that shall adhere to this our dissent and protestation, promised seasonably to give in our reasons ; which accordingly now we do, and desire they may be seriously considered.

(1.) Our very learned and pious predecessors ministers of the Gospel now blessed, who in this North of Ireland planted propagated and wisely and successfully governed this church did, when not restrained by the civil powers, yearly meet in a General Synod both before the Restoration of King Charles II. and since the late happy revolution ; by which means they, with much prudent care maintained and promoted peace, order and unity among themselves and gained reputation from others ; so that the Government from experience of their peaceable behaviour, have permitted (tho' not appointed) us to meet under their indulgent protection and peaceably to do our proper work. Wherefore we cannot without reflecting on the wisdom ability and fidelity of our pious predecessors depart from so laudable a pattern as they have left us and overturn so wise a constitution which by them according to the word of God hath been conveyed to us as a trust to be faithfully kept and transmitted to posterity, which will bring no honour to ourselves who have hitherto approved these meetings.

(2.) The intended judicatory being neither parochial session, presbytery, provincial synod, or national or oecumenical council which are all the kinds of ecclesiastical judicatories known or acknowledged by the church, we cannot in conscience subject ourselves to it or be governed by it, seeing it is no judicatory authorised by Jesus Christ and warranted by the word of God : And as it would be dangerous to set up and obey judicatories in the commonwealth not authorized by the supreme powers ; wherefore it is no less dangerous to set up judicatories in the church and obey them if not authorised and warranted by Him to whom all power in heaven and earth is given.

(3.) We as ministers having a power given us from our Lord and Master not only to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments, but also to rule in conjunction with our brethren in presbyteries and Synods, cannot divest ourselves of that power committed to us personally nor to delegate it to others, more than ambassadors, judges, generals, justices of the peace &c. can delegate their powers unto others, according to the saying of the famous Lord Verulam, that "he to whom a trust or office is committed upon the account of personal qualifications cannot delegate that trust or office unless he also delegate those qualifications on account whereof it was committed to him."

(4.) Nor can we suspend ourselves nor be by others lawfully suspended from the due exercise of our ministerial power without being judicially convicted of such crimes as merit suspension from the said exercise; for as woe shall be to us if we preach not the Gospel, so we are not worthy of double honour if we rule not well and diligently.

(5.) This designed judicatory must be either the Supreme in the church from which lieth no appeal, or subordinate and accountable to the Supreme. If the former be designed and demanded it should be seriously and seasonably considered; (1.) if we may safely clothe a few of ourselves with such a power over us from whose sentence, tho' never so injurious, we may not appeal to the whole: (2.) if we may not as justly set up some prelates over ourselves "*jure ecclesiastico*" with a delegated power to govern this church, which is all that some moderate and episcopal divines have desired: (3.) if it be a thing in itself lawful why may not the civil magistrate oblige us to obey a few set up by a delegated power to judge and govern us, which is all that Erastian statesmen required.—But if this Judicatory be accountable to a superior, whensoever an appeal is made to the superior judicatory, that must be called "*pro re nata*;" and so we are but where we were, and the old Synod must stand; nor will there be by this invention less ground for appealing than formerly: So that all we gain by this project is the supercreation of a needless judicatory without precedent in this church or any other we know. Or if as we hear, the great Synod may meet



every third or fourth year, this will never mend the matter but will occasion a causeless delay of justice or redress of grievances which is always esteemed a denial of justice. Nor can it plead the church of Scotland for its pattern, as the projectors do allege, seeing it is accountable to no superior church-judicatory.

(6.) All presbyterians and some bishops themselves have justly denied that bishops can delegate their power of jurisdiction to their commissaries, officials, surrogates, &c. Wherefore we ought not to set up any official or commissary court of delegates which we so justly condemn in others.

(7.) If we may erect more church-judicatories we may also appoint more church officers; seeing they that have a power to do the one, have the power to do the other also.

(8.) Since we have hitherto taught presbyterian government and judicatories to be of divine appointment, this innovation and change of our ancient constitution will give ground to reflect upon us as Reubenites "unstable as water," that we have no fixed principles, but are now given to changes wearied of our own good old way.

(9.) Hereby we shall gratify our adversaries who have petitioned the government to discharge our great Synods; and tho' the government did not think fit to grant that, yet it seems some of ourselves are more complaisant and willing to resign this our liberty.

(10.) The ruling elders in the Synod being but delegates from their respective sessions cannot delegate others in their stead for "*delegatus not potest delegare alias daretur progressus in infinitum*" which is most absurd; and therefore they had no right to vote in this case, especially seeing they had no commission from their constituents so to do.

(11.) The apparent division in judgment among us in this matter gives ground to reject the overture, as tending to divide and so to destroy this church hitherto happy in its union under the old form of government which be made appear to be as agreeable to the primitive constitution as any now in the Christian world.

But lest some should think we hereby reflect on the General

Assembly of the Church of Scotland we would have them to observe (1.) that it is a national church and we are but a province in a nation : (2.) it is morally impossible for them considering their distance from one another, in some parts being separated by the sea, as also their number, for them to meet altogether : which is not so with us, as appears by our meetings these twenty years past : (3.) neither is the legislature committed to the Gen. Assembly who can make no laws or canons to oblige that church, until the overtures be made and transmitted to every Presbytery from whom they are to receive their returns (at) the next Assembly, before it can pass into a law : (4.) the Executive power is only lodged in the Assembly in matters that come orderly and not "*per saltum*" before them ; as appears by the limitations (which) every commissioner to the Assembly is put under in his commission by which he acts and votes in that Judicatory : (5.) the Provincial Synod of Glasgow and Ayr consisting of above 130 members meet twice every year ; neither do they complain of it as an hardship put upon them, but own it as their merey to meet, know, and converse one with another thereby to maintain brotherly love and prevent mistakes and prejudices which want of knowledge and due correspondence with one another might occasion, which it is to be feared may be the fatal consequence of this project.

For these and other reasons to be produced if need be, to which we reserve ourselves a right, we differ from and protest against all votes and acts which tend to the overthrowing our annual general Synods and against all causeless innovations and alterations brought in or that may be brought in to the prejudice of this church : Requiring that this our protestation may be entered into our Synod-book and that we may have the extract thereof. This is subscribed in our names and of all that adhere to us. By

JOHN M'BRIDE.

THOMAS ORR.

ALEX. M'CRACKEN, &c., &c.

Total, 21 ministers and 6 elders.

## No. II.

SEE CHAPTER XXIII., NOTE 4.

CASE OF REV. W. BIGGAR AND DROGHEDA.

*Com. Villæ Drogheda.*

By William Patoun Esqr. Mayr. of Drogheda.

WHEREAS By an Act made at a Session of Parliament held in this Kingdom on ye 26 Day of Octr. in ye seventeenth year of ye Reign of Charles the Second late King of England Scotland France and Ireland Intituled an Act for ye uniformity of Publick Prayers and Administration of Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies and for establishing ye form of making, ordaining, and consecrating, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons in the Church of Ireland; It is amongst other Things enacted that if any Person who is by that Act Disabled to Preach any Lecture or Sermon should during ye Time that he should continue and remain so Disabled Preach any Sermon or Lecture, that then for every such offence the Person or Persons so offending should suffer three months Imprisonment in ye Comon Goal without Bail or Mainprize and that any two Justices of ye Peace of any county in this Kingdom and ye Mayor or other chief Magistrate of any city or Town corporate within the same upon certificate of the ordinary of the place made to him or them of the offence comitted should and were thereby required to comit the Person or Persons so offending to the Goal of the same County City or Town corporate accordingly as by the said Act may fully appear. And Whereas Wm. Biggar being a Person disabled and not Qualify'd according to the said Act to Preach any Lecture or Sermon, did contrary to the Intent and meaning of that act and without License from any Arch-Bishop Bishop or any other Ecclesiasticall Person of the Church of Ireland, on the 3d day of Octr. in the year of our Lord 1708 at the house of Thomas Siddall in the Town of Drogheda, being a Town corporate in the county of the said Town did in an Assembly of divers Persons Male and Fe-

male then and There met Together to do Some act of Worship or of Religion, preach a Sermon to the said Assembly contrary to ye Intent and meaning of the said Act and Whereas the most Revd. Father in God Narcissus by Divine Providence Lord Arch-Bishop of Armagh Primate and Metropolitan of all Ireland did by his certificate bearing date the 5th of Octr. in the year of our Lord 1708 certifie the said offence of the said Wm. Biggar in these words (viz<sup>t</sup>.) To the Mayor of the Town of Drogheda for the time being we Narcissus Arch-Bishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland having Recd. Information by severall proofs and examinations taken before Willm. Patoun Mayor of ye said Town of Drogheda that Wm. Biggar not being a Person Qualify'd by Law to Preach in any Place of Publick worship within this Kingdom did in Contempt of the Law of this Kingdom and contrary thereunto on the 3d day of Octr. in the year 1708 Publickly Preach a Sermon in and unto an Assembly of Divers men and women met to Worship and to do some act of Religion at the house of Thomas Siddall in Drogheda We Therefore certifie to you that the said William Biggar did Preach in and to the said Assembly at the Time and Place aforesaid and that the said Wm. Biggar is not Qualify'd by Law to preach in any Church or Chapple or place of Publick Worship within this Realm nor was he ever Licensed by us to Preach in or to any Assembly or Congregation whatsoever. Given under our hand and seal this fifth day of Octr. 1708.

NARCISSUS ARDMAGH, *sig.*

These are therefore to will and require you in her Majesty's name to receive and Take into your Custody in the Goal of the said Town and County of Drogheda the Body of the said Wm. Biggar and him there safely keep for his said offence by the space of three months without Bail or Mainprize or untill he shall be thence discharged by due course of Law. Given under the hand and seal of me Wm. Patoun Mayor of the said Town on the 9th day of Octr. in the year of our Lord 1708.

WILLIAM PATOUN *Mayor.*

*Copia Vera.*



*Remarks on the Mittimus given Mr. Biggar at Drogheda.*

Mr. William Biggar Presbyterian Minister of Bangor in the County of Down Ireland being at the earnest request of some Dissenters in and about Drogheda sent by the Presbytery of Down to preach to them which he did. Whereupon the Mayor of Drogheda did at the Instance of the Arch-Bishop of Ardmagh and his Dean in Drogheda commit him to Prison as per Mittimus appears : where

*First,* 'tis to be considered his crime is only preaching a Sermon without the Bishop's licence, no false Doctrine or Seditions being laid to his Charge He being a Person known to be well affected to her present Maties. Government, and an Orthodox Protestant.

*Secondly,* The Act on which he is Imprison'd appears to intend only such, as tho' being in Orders of Priest or Deacon Preach without the Bishop's Licence, for how could he by that Certificate be said to preach a Sermon, and yet denied to be a Preacher.

*3ly,* The Arch Bishop very well knows that there are Two Popish Priests settled in that Town, who ordinarily say Mass, contrair the express intent of that Act. And to Imprison a Protestant Minister for preaching one Sermon, when they allow Priests to say Mass dayly, which the Church of England's Articles Art: 31, declares to be blasphemous Fables and dangerous deceits seems hardly agreeable with zeal for the Protestant Religion, and is a gross pice of partiality : If it be said the Papists have Liberty by Act of Parliament, Then it must be acknowledged that the Act of Uniformity is not in force against Papists as it was originally intended, but only against Protestant Dissenters, and so

*Dat veniam Corvis, vexat Censura Columbas.*

*4ly,* No Dissenting Minr. hath been imprisoned merely for preaching, these Fourty Years bypast, except this same person who was for the same alledged crime imprison'd in Gallway, by

the order of the Arch Bishop of Tuam : but was liberate by order of the Government. The Marquess of Winchester, and Earle of Galloway being then Chief Governours.

5ly, Seeing her Ma<sup>tie</sup>. grants the Presbyterian Minrs. in Ulster a Pension of 1200 lib. p. an : which Pension was approven by the Parlia<sup>t</sup> of Ireland when others were struck out of the Civill List, we cannot think her Ma<sup>tie</sup>. would Imprison her own Pensioners for doing that on account whereof they have their Pension.

6ly, Dissenting Ministers are permitted to preach in Dublin, and in all the considerable Corporations in Ireland, and we see no reason why not also in Drogheda ; especially considering the great number of Irish Papists well known to be disaffected to her Ma<sup>ties</sup>. Government who are hereby much encouraged when they find themselves protected in their Idolatry and Superstition and faithfull British Protestants persecuted by Protestants.

7ly, Drogheda being a Sea Port Town of considerable Trade to which there is a great resort of Traders both from South and North Brittain, it is hard that neither these of the Established Church in North Brittain or these by Law tolerated in South Brittain should be permitted to hear one of their own perswasion at Drogheda, where both Papists and Quakers have their Liberty.

8ly, While her Ma<sup>ties</sup>. Ambassadors are pleading for the Liberty of Protestant Calvenists abroad we are well assured She will never approve of Persecuting them at home.

9ly, The French Protestants, tho' Aliens, have their Liberty in Ireland, and why not free born subjects of the same Religion.

10ly, Considering that the Presbyterians in Ireland are the greatest body of British Protestants in that Kingdom, able without letting the Plow stand to bring 20000 men to the Field when required in Defence of the Brittish interest and Protestant Religion there, it is strange that they should be kept under Penal Laws and disabled to serve their Queen and Country by the Sacramental Test, when these that Persequite them know and acknowledge they are not able to defend themselves without them, and 'tis but an ill reward for their great and good service done at the late happy Revolution.

11ly, The Imprisoning Presbyterian Ministers in Ireland only

for preaching of the Gospel will no doubt augment these Jealousies in the minds of their Friends in Scotland as to their own Security by the Union, and increase the dislike of the Late Union.

*Memorial relating to the Presbyterians in Ireland. Presented to the Loras-Justices in November 1709.*

There being a company of people in the Town of Drogheda in Ireland to the number of 200 of the presbn. perswasion they applied unto the Presbn. Min<sup>rs</sup>. for one of their own perswasion to preach to them, as had bin done for a long tract of time in many other places of that kingdom w<sup>t</sup> out molestation or disturbance. Whereupon the Min<sup>rs</sup>. sent Mr. William Biggar Minister at Bangor to preach for a season to these in Drogheda For which he was apprehended, the 9th of October last, upon a Certificate from the Arch Bp of Ardmagh, founded upon the Act of Uniformity made in the 17th year of K. Charles the 2nd, And incarcerat as a person preaching without license from the Bishop, by the Mayor of Drogheda, where he the s<sup>d</sup>. Mr. Biggar still remains in prison.

It is humbly considered That this procedure of the Arch Bishop and Mayor cannot be Justified by the fores<sup>d</sup> Act of Uniformity In respect the presbns. over all Ireland haue enjoyed a long and uninterrupted possession of their liberty or free exercise of their Religion not only without being quarrelled by the Government But under the Grant of a Royal Bounty from several preceeding Sovereigns as well as from her present Majesty for the encouragement and support of their Ministers. And the great benefit that accrued to the presbns. in Ireland, as a body of Dissenters, by the late happy Revolution being a confirmation of their Liberty and Security from being persecuted for their consciences, This practice of raising vexation and distress against them merely upon that account, doth evidently cross and counteract the spirit, principles and design of the Revolution and frustrate the blessed and comfortable benefits which her Ma<sup>ties</sup>. best protestant subjects have hitherto enjoyed thereby, especially considering how much connivance is given to

papists and their public masses generally throw all Ireland, and at this very tyme there are three or four Massing priests who avowedly reside in the town of Drogheda and actually officiat there without ever being questioned, whereby it plainly appears from what spring these hardships on protestant dissenters do arise and to what Issue they tend.

It is therefore humbly proposed That not only an effectual and speedy stop be put to these practices, but likewise

1<sup>o</sup>. That the parliament Grant an Act of Toleration in favors of the presbyterians in Ireland, or extend the English Act unto them, there being alike reason for the one as for the other, or rather a greater reason for the former, they having signalized their loyalty to K. William and their zeal for the Revolution and protestant Religion beyond what the other had occasion to do, It is very hard that they should be more exposed than their Brethren in England to the grievous effects of a persecuting antichristian and antirevolution spirit, especially the danger arising therefrom both to protestancy and to the tranquillity of the present Government being greater in Ireland, upon the account both of the multitude and of the untameableness of papists there, than in England.

2<sup>o</sup>. That the Sacramentary Test both in Brittain and Ireland be intirely abolished. It being utterly unaccountable That what was at first designed only as a Barr against papists whose principles and consciences oblige them to disturb and undermine every Government that is not subject to the Pope, should be employed and kept up to exclude from useful service to the Government and their country so many of her Maties. most able, most peaceable and most affectionat protestant subjects. It being also an high scandal and reproach to Christianity That the most sacred and solemn ordinance of the Lord's Supper should be prostituted to be the condition of any man's having access to a civil employment; And that prophane men should be under a temptation of eating and drinking damnation to themselves (which in the construction of Scripture i Cor. ii. 29. is the true import and danger of eating and drinking unworthily) in order to qualify themselves for a place of Trust or gain, and thereby destroy their souls for



ever to purchase a little temporary subsistence for their perishing bodies or perhaps to feed their Lusts.

3<sup>o</sup>. Whereas the Presbiterians in England are obliged to subscribe the first 36 Articles of the Church of England before they can enjoy the benefit of the Act of Toleration, It is to be considered Whether in the present circumstance of an union betwixt Scotland and England, by which presbytery is the legally established Government of the Church in Scotland as prelacy is in England, It were not more Just and profitable, and a more certain, firm and obliging establishment of the union, That all presbyterian Ministers tolerated both in England and Ireland (but more especially in Ireland where they are generally all Scotsmen) should only be bound to subscribe The Confession of Faith ratified by the parliat. in Scotland And that all preachers of the prelatical perswasion who are or may be tolerated in Scotland be required to sign the whole 39 Articles of the Church of England. Whether is it not equal In an incorporating Union that the two legall Churches of the two United Kingdoms be thus brought nearer to a level or ballance with respect to their legal settlements; whether wold not this be a more satisfying security to such presbns. in Scotland who are not fully reconciled to the Union becaus they Judge their Church constitution is thereby rendered precarious; And whether might not this prove an effectual mean to destroy the Monster of persecution for ever in both parties, and to establish that Gospel peace and mutual forbearance amongst protestants which is the Christian design and Tendency of the Revolution and her Maties. Reign as well as (by abolishing animosities and factious Interests) to secure the civil quiet of these nations. And lastly whether is it with any probability to be expected that such methods shall take place in the Reign of a Successour bound by the conditions of Entail not only to be of the communion of the Church of England But likewise to execute all the Laws in favours of that communion, whereof the Acts on which high and violent churchment found their persecuting practices, make no small part; which is an unreasonable overballance against the legal church of Scotland in a state of Union, and which Laws haue always furnished ill men with an handle

and pretence to disquiet and oppress their peaceable neighbours. [If the happiness proposed in the above mentioned overtures, be not attained in her present Maties. benign and auspicious Reign, her Ma. being under no such obligations as are laid upon the Succession of Entail.\*

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No. III.

SEE CHAPTER XXVIII., NOTE 5.

WHEN Mr. Alexander Stewart became a landed proprietor of the county of Down, and settled at Newtownards, he was soon regarded with great jealousy by the old gentry of that part of Ulster. Very few of them were equal to him in point of wealth, whilst his superior intelligence, his affability, and his exemplary conduct, secured for him general respect. As he was attached by conviction to the cause of nonconformity, and as he was forward to embrace every opportunity of promoting its interests, he speedily acquired immense influence with the constituency of a Presbyterian county. Soon after the passing of the Octennial Bill, this influence appeared, for his son Robert was then returned to parliament as one of the representatives of the Yorkshire of Ireland. At the general election of 1783, "the independent party" attempted to return *two* members for the county of Down, and thus completely to oust the Hillsborough family from the representation. The effort was unsuccessful, and, during the election, when the friends of the Earl of Hillsborough saw that the seat of his son, Lord Kilwarlin, was secure, they agreed to give their second votes to Mr. Ward, and thus contrived to mortify the independent party by placing Mr. Robert Stewart, the more popular candidate, at the foot of the poll. The constituency of the county of Down was now split up into two great factions, and, at the elections of 1790 and 1805, the families of Hill and Stewart struggled for victory with desperate energy. On these occasions the subordinate agents were not very scru-

\* Wodrow's Folio MSS., vol. xxxv., arts. 72, 73, and 74.

pulous as to the tales they circulated with a view to injure the reputation of the other party; and as the Stewarts were confessedly but comparatively recent settlers in the county of Down, it soon began to be insinuated that they were of discreditable origin. At the election of 1805, these rumours appear to have been first promulgated in squibs, and various other forms, and in many quarters they are now currently believed. The following statements, taken chiefly from the MS. of Mr. Stone, noticed in the preceding part of this history, will show that they are utterly destitute of foundation.

Miss Mary Cowan, to whom Mr. Alexander Stewart was married, was the daughter of Alderman Cowan of Derry. This gentleman, who had married the sister of Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart of Ballylawn, was a staunch Presbyterian, and, in consequence of the passing of the Sacramental Test Act, was ejected from the Derry corporation. (See chapter xxii., note 37.) He and his father were distinguished during the siege, and endured a full share of its dangers and privations. It is said that a lady of the family had a favourite grey horse, which, if discovered, would have been certainly killed for food, but that she contrived to keep the animal concealed, and to have it fed with hay during the whole of the siege. Alderman Cowan died possessed of considerable property, consisting of the lands of Campsie, on the banks of the Faughan, and tenements in the city and neighbourhood of Derry. This property was inherited by his daughter, Miss Mary Cowan, and, before her death, produced a rental of £600 per annum. At one time, Alderman Cowan had much more extensive possessions, but in consequence of losses sustained in some commercial speculations in which he had engaged, he had been obliged to sell a large property in Burt. The greater portion of Miss Cowan's fortune was derived from another quarter. Her father had, by a former marriage, a son, Robert, who went out to India, and there soon rose to eminence as a merchant. On a particular occasion he managed a negotiation with which he was entrusted so skilfully, and rendered such valuable services to the East India Company, that the Court of Directors in London appointed him governor of Bombay. In 1736,

he returned, with great reputation and wealth, to England, was knighted by George II., and sat for a short time in the British parliament. Before leaving Bombay, he had executed a will, bequeathing his entire property to his half brother, William Cowan, (who had gone out to India under his auspices), and, in the event of his dying without issue, to his half sister, Mary Cowan. In the beginning of the year 1737, Sir Robert Cowan died in London of quinsy, and though the intelligence had not then reached England, William Cowan had died shortly before in India. Meanwhile, other members of the family also died, and Miss Mary Cowan was now sole heiress of all the property of her father and her two brothers. A few months after the death of Sir Robert Cowan, she married her cousin, Mr. Alex. Stewart; but, before taking this step, she had a marriage settlement executed, vesting her fortune according to her wishes. Hugh Henry, Esq., the well-known banker of Dublin, was one of her trustees. Mrs. Stone, the wife of Major Stone, at whose house in Dublin she was married, was the granddaughter of Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart of Ballylawn, and the first cousin of both the bride and bridegroom. At the time of her marriage, Miss Cowan was twenty-four years of age, and about fourteen years younger than her husband. Though by no means handsome, she possessed the more enduring recommendation of a humane and agreeable disposition. She survived Mr. Stewart seven years, and died at Newtownards on the 7th of April 1788.

When very young, Mr. Alexander Stewart exhibited those excellent traits of character by which he was distinguished throughout life. He had scarcely reached the age of twenty-one years when Mr. John Kennedy of Cultra died, but his brother-in-law, though possessed of a very considerable fortune, had formed so high an estimate of his integrity, prudence, and capacity, that he nominated him his executor, and appointed him guardian of his children. In many respects, Captain Thomas Stewart of Ballylawn, and his brother Alexander, presented a striking contrast. Thomas was a high Tory. He sold his commission on the accession of George I. to the throne; and when Mr. Andrews, a citizen of Derry, and father of one of the provosts of Trinity College, Dublin, was sentenced to stand in the pillory for having spoken



disrespectfully of the government of the new sovereign, Captain Stewart stood near him, with his sword in his hand, ready to resent any affront that might be offered to the condemned gentleman. Mr. Alexander Stewart was a decided Whig, and a zealous adherent of the house of Hanover. Instead of residing on his estate at Ballylawn, Captain Stewart lived in Derry, and indulged in so lavish an expenditure, that he was at length obliged to sell a portion of his property. Mr. Alexander Stewart, though noted for his generosity to his friends, was an enemy to empty show and extravagance. On the demise of Captain Stewart, his wife claimed the Ballylawn estate, and as she had induced her husband, before his death, to execute some deed in her favour, she endeavoured, by the assistance of her brother, who was a justice of the king's bench, to make good her title; but the tenants, who were Presbyterians, and who sided with Mr. Alexander Stewart, refused to recognise her pretensions. She commenced a suit at law to establish her claims, but, in 1733, whilst the case was still pending, she died, and Mr. Stewart was then permitted to retain quiet possession of the property.

Mr. Alexander Stewart was acquainted with Sir Robert Cowan, and dined with him at his house in London on the day on which the latter was seized with the complaint which so soon proved fatal. In 1743, when Mr. Stewart bought the estate of Comber, it yielded a rental of about £1100 per annum, and he obtained it for twenty-one years' purchase. In the following year, he purchased the estate of Newtownards, producing about £2200 per annum, on the same terms. About the year 1750, he erected a mansion for himself at Newtownards, and contributed greatly as a resident landlord, to the improvement of his property. In 1743, there were only two slated dwellings in the parish of Comber—viz., the glebe-house and the old house of Ballybeen. At the same time, there were not more than three good slated houses in Newtownards. Mr. Alexander Stewart built the market-house of that town, laid out the large square in front for a market-place, and effected many other improvements. "He had no small share of ambition," says Dr. Dickson ("Narrative," p. 7), "but it was an ambition to raise his family to honour and influence in his country, for his country's good."

## No. IV.

## SEE CHAPTER XXX., NOTE 61.

LIST of the congregations of the Synod of Ulster and Presbytery of Antrim, with the names of the ministers and the amount of stipend paid to each, as furnished by the Rev. Robert Black to Lord Castlereagh, April 27, 1799.

No.	Congregations.	Counties.	Ministers.	Yearly Stipend.
1	Belfast 1st .....	Antrim	Dr. Bruce .....	£200
2	Do. 2d.....	"	Patrick Vance .....	170
3	Do. 3d.....	"	Sinclair Kelburn .....	120
4	Do. 4th .....	"	Vacant.....	100
5	Carnmoney .....	"	John Thompson .....	55
6	Ballyclare .....	"	Foote Marshall .....	30
7	Antrim 1st .....	"	William Bryson .....	45
8	Do. 2d .....	"	Alexander Montgomery.....	40
9	Ahoghill .....	"	James Cuming .....	25
10	Broughshane .....	"	Charles Brown .....	50
11	Ballymena .....	"	William Hamilton .....	67
12	Buckna.....	"	David Park.....	30
13	Connor.....	"	Henry Henry .....	75
14	Cullybackey.....	"	Robert Christy .....	35
15	Clough .....	"	Vacant.....	50
16	Duneean and Grange.....	"	Robert Scott .....	30
17	Portglenone .....	"	Alexander Speers .....	30
18	Randalstown .....	"	Thomas Henry .....	60
19	Ballywillan .....	"	Robert Thompson .....	50
20	Dervock .....	"	Alexander Martin .....	45
21	Billy.....	"	Daniel M'Kee.....	40
22	Dunluce .....	"	John Cameron.....	20
23	Ramoan .....	"	William Lynd.....	30
24	Armoyn .....	"	Hugh M'Clelland .....	25
25	Ballymoney .....	"	Alexander Marshall .....	70
26	Finvoy .....	"	James Elder .....	40
27	Kilraughts .....	"	Matthew Elder .....	50
28	Donegore .....	"	John Wright .....	60
29	Ballyeaston .....	"	William Montgomery.....	50
30	Ballyearry .....	"	John Bankhead .....	60
31	Carrickfergus .....	"	John Savage .....	75

No.	Congregations.	Counties.	Ministers.	Yearly Stipend.
32	Ballynure.....	Antrim	Adam Hill .....	£40
33	Killead .....	"	Robert Orr .....	60
34	Larne 1st .....	"	James Worrall .....	70
35	Do. 2d .....	"	Robert Thomson .....	45
36	Islandmagee .....	"	John Murphy .....	35
37	Glenarm .....	"	Robert Acheson .....	40
38	Cairncastle .....	"	Thomas Alexander .....	42
39	Crumlin .....	"	Vacant .....	50
40	Templepatrick .....	"	Robert Campbell .....	57
41	Ballinderry .....	"	William Whitlaw .....	20
42	Lisburn .....	"	Andrew Craig .....	80
43	Armagh .....	Armagh	Thomas Cuming .....	116
44	Creggan & Newtown- hamilton .....	"	Joseph Jackson .....	40
45	Dumbanagher .....	"	Alexander Patterson .....	35
46	Mountnorris .....	"	Francis Turretine .....	35
47	Lurgan .....	"	William Magee .....	30
48	Clare .....	"	Samuel Livingston .....	60
49	Markethill .....	"	William Charleton .....	45
50	Loughgall .....	"	Moses Hogg .....	30
51	Keady .....	"	Vacant .....	50
52	Richhill and Vinecash	"	Thomas Reid .....	30
53	Lisluney .....	"	Vacant .....	40
54	Derry .....	Derry	David Young & Robt. Black	240
55	Glendermot 1st .....	"	Henry Millar .....	40
56	Do. 2d .....	"	Vacant .....	50
57	Cumber .....	"	Samuel Patten .....	40
58	Banagher .....	"	John Law .....	20
59	Bovevagh .....	"	Francis Gray .....	45
60	Screegan .....	"	Joseph Osborne .....	40
61	Coleraine 1st .....	"	Matthew Culbert .....	60
62	Do. 2d .....	"	John Glasgow .....	70
63	Faughanvale .....	"	Henry Elder .....	40
64	Newtownlimavady .....	"	Joseph Osborne .....	30
65	Tobermore .....	"	Alexander Carson .....	60
66	Money more .....	"	William Moore .....	60
67	Castledawson .....	"	Robert Henry .....	35
68	Drumbo .....	"	William Knox .....	36
69	Ballyrashane .....	"	John Logan .....	23
70	Ballykelly .....	"	Robert Rentoul .....	70
71	Drumachose .....	"	Daniel Blair .....	50
72	Aghadoey .....	"	Archibald Fullerton .....	40
73	Kilrea .....	"	Vacant .....	30

No.	Congregations.	Counties.	Ministers.	Yearly Stipend.
74	Garvagh .....	Derry	James Brown .....	£45
75	Maghera .....	"	Vacant .....	50
76	Macosquin .....	"	James M'Farland .....	40
77	Moville .....	Donegal	Robert Caldwell .....	15
78	Donagh .....	"	Robert Scott .....	18
79	Malin .....	"	John Canning .....	30
80	Fahan and Bunerana .....	"	William Hamilton .....	30
81	Burt .....	"	Hugh Brooke .....	55
82	Taughboyne (now } Monreagh) .....	"	Vacant .....	30
83	St. Johnstone .....	"	William Cunningham .....	70
84	Knowhead .....	"	Richard Dill .....	45
85	Stranorlar .....	"	Joseph Lovo .....	45
86	Convoy .....	"	James Taylor .....	45
87	Donaghmore .....	"	Samuel Dill .....	55
88	Lifford .....	"	James Houston .....	50
89	Raphoe .....	"	William Ramsay .....	45
90	Ray .....	"	Francis Dill .....	35
91	Letterkenney .....	"	Joseph Lyttle .....	55
92	Ramelton .....	"	William Burke .....	50
93	Fanet .....	"	James Delap .....	40
94	Dunfanaghy & Kil } maerenan .....	"	David Allen .....	34
95	Donegal and Bally- } shannon .....	"	William Huston .....	40
96	Douglas and Clady .....	Tyrone	Thomas Leitch .....	40
97	Downpatrick .....	Down	James Neilson .....	65
98	Moneyrea .....	"	Samuel Patten .....	60
99	Castlereagh .....	"	Alexander Henry .....	50
100	Millisle .....	"	Andrew Greer .....	40
101	Kirkcubbin .....	"	George Brydone .....	50
102	Holywood 1st .....	"	William Crawford .....	36
103	Do. 2d .....	"	Joseph Harrison .....	50
104	Drumbo .....	"	Samuel Hanna .....	70
105	Newtownards 1st .....	"	John M'Ilwaine .....	70*
106	Do. 2d .....	"	Vacant .....	60
107	Killinchy .....	"	Samuel Watson .....	70
108	Saintfield .....	"	Vacant .....	70
109	Dromara .....	"	James Birch .....	70
110	Dromore 1st .....	"	James Bankhead .....	80
111	Do. 2d .....	"	James Waddel .....	60
112	Anahilt .....	"	Robert M'Clure .....	50

\* Including Lord Londonderry's grant, valued at 30 guineas per annum.



No.	Congregations.	Counties.	Ministers.	Yearly Stipend.
113	Killileagh	Down	Joseph Little	£63
114	Donaghmore	"	Joseph Hay	60
115	Magherally	"	Isaac Patrick	45
116	Rathfriland	"	Samuel Barber	50
117	Ballynahnieh	"	John M'Clelland	55
118	Cumber	"	John M'Cance	65
119	Ballyroney	"	William Fletcher	60
120	Mourne	"	Moses Thomson	50
121	Loughbrickland	"	John Smith	60
122	Tullylish	"	John Sherrard	60
123	Dundonald	"	James Caldwell	50
124	Glastry	"	James Sinclair	50
125	Ballywalter	"	James Cochran	40
126	Bangor	"	David Taggart	75
127	Greyabbey	"	Vacant	40
128	Donaghadee	"	Vacant	50
129	Ballee	"	Josiah Kerr	50
130	Moir	"	John Wightman	20
131	Portaferry	"	Vacant	80
132	Clough	"	Robert Porter	50
133	Kilmore	"	Moses Neilson	50
134	Banbridge	"	Nathaniel Shaw	80
135	Newry	"	Vacant	140
136	Narrow-water and } Carlingford }	"	Robert Dickson	21
137	Dunmurry	"	William Taggart	60
138	Usher's Quay	Dublin	Wm. Wilson & Hugh Moore	234
139	Mary's Abbey	"	{ Benjamin M'Dowel and } James Horner }	250
140	Ballyjamesduff	Cavan	James Kennedy	25
141	Killeshandra	"	Vacant	50
142	Cootehill	"	Thomas Stewart	20
143	Baillieborough	"	Robert Montgomery	20
144	Enniskillen	Fermanagh	Joseph Denham	40
145	Dundalk	Louth	William Neilson	30
146	Ervy & Carrickmaclin	Meath	William Moore	35
147	Mayo	Mayo	Alexander Marshall	30
148	Corboy	Longford	Vacant	50
149	Monaghan	Monaghan	Matthew Trimble	40
150	Ballibay	"	Vacant	60
151	Castleblayney	"	John Davies	40
152	Stonebridge	"	James Whiteside	36
153	Glennan	"	James M'Curdy	25

No.	Congregations.	Counties.	Ministers.	Yearly Stipend.
154	Clontibret .....	Monaghan	James Goudy .....	£30
155	Drum .....	"	James Walker .....	15
156	Omagh 1st .....	Tyrone	Robert Nelson .....	30
157	Do. 2d .....	"	Hugh Delap .....	50
158	Donagheady 1st .....	"	Hugh Hamill .....	45
159	Ardstraw .....	"	Robert Clark .....	50
160	Drumquin and Pettigo .....	"	Thomas Anderson .....	40
161	Badony .....	"	Charles Hemphill .....	40
162	Derg .....	"	James Henderson .....	40
163	Strabane .....	"	William Dunlop .....	105
164	Carlan .....	"	William Kennedy .....	40
165	Benburb .....	"	James Whiteside .....	40
166	Dungannon .....	"	William Stitt .....	47
167	Minterburn .....	"	Hugh Boylan .....	40
168	Magherafelt .....	"	George Dugall .....	60
	Brigh .....	"	Thomas M'Kay .....	57
	Stewartstown .....	"	James Adams .....	50
	.....	"	John Davison .....	60
	.....	"	Vacant .....	40
	..... and Dromore .....	"	William Moorhead .....	35
	..... & Bally- } .....	"	James Davison .....	65
	.....	"	James Kerr .....	40
169	.....	"	Andrew Millar .....	50
177	..... creek .....	"	William Johnston .....	40
178	Donagheady 2d .....	"	John Holmes .....	50
179	Urney .....	"	Andrew Alexander .....	50
180	Crossroads .....	"	James M'Clintock .....	45
181	Sligo and Ballymote .....	Sligo	Booth Caldwell .....	30
182	Turlough .....	Mayo	James Hall .....	30
183	Stratford .....	Wicklow	Unsettled .....	—



ERRATA.

- 13, line 13, for "Embryn," read "Emlyn."
- 14, note 15, first line, for "Embryn," read "Emlyn."
- 15, line 2, for "Newry," read "Antrim."
- 9, line 2, for "a capital punishment," read "capital punishment."
- line 24, for "it may be," read "it may have been."
- line 25, for "would express," read "expressed."
- lines 26 and 27, the pointing should stand thus—"pungency, and  
an unpleasant altercation was likely to ensue as, yielding."
- ... 2, for "its," read "it."





# INDEX.

---

- Abernethy, Rev. John, sen., ii. 342, 395.
- Abernethy, Rev. John, jun., iii. 156—publishes a sermon, iii. 161—his orthodoxy questioned, iii. 275.
- Abjuration Oath to be taken by all official persons, iii. 15.
- Academical Institution of Belfast, iii. 456—disputes respecting it, iii. 459, 475.
- Act of Bangor, ii. 190.
- Adair, Bishop Archibald, i. 250, 277.
- Adair, Mr., of Ballymena, i. 278.
- Adair, Sir Robert, i. 379, 381; ii. 73, 181.
- Adair, Rev. Patrick, i. 196; ii. 36, 232, 309.
- Adderton, Bishop, executed, i. 277.
- Aird, Rev. John, i. 356.
- Ambrose, Rev. William, ii. 398.
- Annesley, Mr., ii. 14, 46.
- Antrim, Earl of, captured, i. 408—escapes, i. 439.
- Antrim, important meeting at, iii. 108.
- Antrim, Presbytery of, iii. 234—excluded from Synod of Ulster, iii. 247.
- Apologetical Narration, i. 461.
- Aprichard, Mr., a licentiate, iii. 280.
- Ards, Lady, ii. 283.
- Argyle, Marquis of, ii. 29, 65.
- Arian controversy reviewed, iii. 489, 490, 491.
- Arianism of Emlyn, iii. 14—Bishop Clayton, iii. 336—and others, iii. 360, 363, 454, 475, 477.
- Assembly, General, of Scotland, sends ministers to Ireland, i. 364, 380, 449; ii. 2.
- Assembly of Glasgow of 1638, i. 208.
- Associate Presbytery, the, iii. 277.
- Baird, Rev. John, i. 356, 358; ii. 41.
- Bale, bishop of Ossory, i. 36.
- Bankhead, Rev. John, iii. 433.
- Baptists, i. 373; ii. 167, 197, 201, 203.
- Barrow, Colonel, ii. 186.
- Barnett, Rev. John, D.D., iii. 283, note.
- Bateson, Sir Robert, iii. 397, note.
- Baty, Mr., ordained, i. 375.
- Beatty, Rev. Charles, iii. 356.
- Bedell, bishop of Kilmore, i. 150, 152, 165, 254—dies, i. 319, 320, 323.
- Belfast Academy established, iii. 403.
- Belfast Society, the, iii. 158, 159.
- Belfast taken, i. 452—its comparative Episcopal and Presbyterian population, iii. 513.
- Benburb, battle of, ii. 24.

- Berkley, Lord, ii. 296, 298, 309.
- Bibles, two large ones sent to Dublin,  
i. 44—destroyed by Romanists, i.  
316—great demand for, iii. 453.
- Biggar, case of Rev. William, ii.  
452.
- Bishoprics, Irish, in 15th century,  
poor, i. 7.
- Bishops, Romish, in Ireland, rapa-  
cious, i. 8—and profligate, i. 11.
- Black Oath, i. 232, 234.
- Black, Rev. Robert, D.D., iii. 397,  
419, 442, 458, 461, 465.
- Blackwood, John, of Ballyleidy, iii.  
40.
- Blair, Rev. Robert, i. 96, 102, 115,  
128, 130, 170, 211, 367.
- Blair, Mr. Bryce, iii. 71.
- Blaney, Lord, ii. 242, 350.
- Blood's plot, ii. 273.
- Bole, Rev. Mr., i. 239.
- Bond, Rev. James, iii. 355.
- Book of Common Prayer not pub-  
lished in Irish till reign of James  
I., i. 52—prohibited, ii. 51.
- Boulter, Primate, iii. 261, 265.
- Boyle, Archbishop, ii. 302.
- Boyne, battle of, ii. 386.
- Boyse, Rev. Joseph, ii. 407, 412,  
425, 429—answers Tisdall, iii. 117  
—supports non-subscribers, iii. 198,  
206.
- Bramhall, Bishop, i. 156, 158, 245;  
ii. 241, 257—his death, ii. 284.
- Brice, Rev. Edward, i. 93.
- Bristol, Earl of, bishop of Derry, iii.  
383.
- Broghill, Lord, ii. 242.
- Brown, George, archbishop of Dub-  
lin, i. 20.
- Brown, Rev. John, D.D., iii. 501.
- Bruce, archdeacon of Raphoe, i. 217.
- Bruce, Rev. Dr., of Belfast, iii. 421,  
475.
- Bruce, Rev. Michael, of Killinchy, ii.  
209, 260, 285.
- Bruce, Rev. Michael, of Holywood,  
iii. 183, 251.
- Bruce, Mr. William, of Dublin, iii.  
323.
- Bruce, Rev. Professor, iii. 474.
- Bryce, Rev. James, iii. 451, 452.
- Brydone, Rev. George, iii. 404.
- Burghers and Antiburghers, origin of,  
iii. 301—union of, iii. 466.
- Butler, Dr. James, R. C. Archbishop  
of Cashel, iii. 392.
- Butler, Sir Theobald, iii. 24.
- Buttle, Rev. David, ii. 9.
- Buttle, Mr. David, iii. 32, note.
- Cairns, William, iii. 32, note, 44, note.
- Caldwell, Rev. Booth, iii. 447.
- Cameron, Rev. John, iii. 338, 362,  
367.
- Campbell, Hugh, i. 105.
- Campbell, Rev. Dr., of Armagh, iii.  
384, 385, 393.
- Campbell, Rev. John, challenges  
Presbyterian ministers, iii. 57.
- Candidates for the Presbyterian  
ministry, their course of study, iii.  
12, 273, 366, 402, 465.
- Canons, Irish, of 1634, i. 160, 162.
- Capel, Lord, ii. 421, 422, 430, 432,  
433.
- Carlile, Rev. James, D.D., iii. 462,  
483, 497.
- Carlisle, Rev. John, iii. 290.
- Carrickfergus preserved, i. 298—  
seized, ii. 72—battered, ii. 372—  
taken, iii. 354.
- Carson, Rev. Alexander, iii. 447,  
449.
- Castlehaven, Lord, i. 455.
- Castlereagh, Lord, iii. 320, 398, 439,  
460.
- Cathcart, Rev. John, ii. 283.

- Census of 1834 incorrect, ii. 411, note; iii. 498, 499, 500, 501.
- Cessation with Romanists, i. 402.
- Chappell, Provost of Dublin college, i. 159, 281.
- Charles I. ascends the throne, i. 136  
—how his death was regarded by High-Churchmen, ii. 82.
- Charles II.'s restoration, ii. 235.
- Cherry, Rev. George, iii. 279, 354.
- Chichester, Sir Arthur, i. 77; ii. 50.
- Chieftains, Irish, lawless, i. 16.
- Choppin, Rev. Richard, iii. 131.
- Claneboy, Lord, i. 237, 304, 359.
- Clarendon, Lord, ii. 327.
- Clark, Rev. Thomas, iii. 342, 344, 346, 347.
- Classification of Bounty, iii. 434, 435, 441, 451.
- Clayton, Bishop, an Arian, iii. 336.
- Clotworthy, Lady, ii. 184.
- Clotworthy, Sir John, i. 103, 264, 267, 331, 352, 388; ii. 48, 77, 196, 199, 231, 237.
- Clotworthy, Sir Hugh, i. 103.
- Code of discipline prepared, iii. 470.
- Cole, Dr., his commission, i. 42.
- Coleraine, mortality there, i. 315.
- College, Presbyterian, proposed, iii. 414, 432.
- Colville, Rev. Alexander, iii. 157.
- Colville, Rev. Alexander, M.D., iii. 231, 233, 314.
- Colville, Doctor, ii. 17, 18.
- Colville, Sir Robert, ii. 340.
- Colwort, Rev. Henry, i. 109, 211.
- Confession of Faith for the Church of Ireland, i. 90—set aside, i. 161.
- Confession, Westminster, to be subscribed, iii. 39, 108, 109, 129, 171, 274, 312, 401, 501.
- Connaught Plantation proposed, i. 137.
- Conolly, Mr., befriends Presbyterians, iii. 115.
- Conventicle Act, ii. 296.
- Convocation of 1634, i. 160, 162—of 1711; iii. 61, note.
- Conway, Colonel, ii. 25, 46, 58.
- Cooke, Rev. Henry, D.D., iii. 468, 471, 473, 476, 481, 484, 491.
- Cooper, Colonel, ii. 215.
- Coote, Sir Charles, ii. 53, 54, 57, 75, 228, 242, 243.
- Corbet, John, i. 248, 253.
- Corke, Earl of, i. 141.
- Covenant, National, of Scotland, i. 207.
- Covenant, Solemn League and, i. 389—taken in Ulster, i. 423, 431.
- Covenanters, or Reformed Presbyterians, iii. 362, 395, 452, 476.
- Cowan, Alderman, iii. 532.
- Cox, Rev. Mr., ii. 232.
- Craghead, Rev. Robert, ii. 393, 394, 408; iii. 131, 166, 267.
- Crawford, Rev. Dr., iii. 403.
- Croft, Sir James, i. 32.
- Cromer, Archbishop of Armagh, i. 21—maintains the authority of the Pope, i. 24.
- Cromwell, Henry, ii. 200, 201, 207, 212, 217.
- Cromwell, Oliver, ii. 128, 204.
- Crookshanks, Rev. John, ii. 285, 286, 287, note.
- Crosby, Sir Piers, i. 200.
- Cuming, Rev. Thomas, iii. 420.
- Cumyng, Doctor Duncan, ii. 336.
- Cunningham, Rev. Robert, i. 95, 190, 197.
- Cunningham, Rev. Robert, ii. 37.
- Cunningham, Rev. Hugh, i. 356, ii. 43.
- Cunningham, Rev. William, i. 111.
- Cunningham, Mr. William, iii. 32, note.



- Dalway, Captain, ii. 259, note.  
 Dalway, Mr., iii. 40, note.  
 Darragh, Rev. Robert, case of, iii. 83.  
 Deacons in the Irish Presbyterian Church, i. 116.  
 Dean Swift, ii. 418 ; iii. 37, 42, 116, 268.  
 Declaration of council of the army, ii. 102.  
 Declaration by presbytery at Bangor, ii. 119, 127.  
 Declaration of Irish parliament, ii. 258.  
 Declaration for liberty of conscience, i. 332.  
 Declaration of Synod of Ulster against schemes of United Irishmen, iii. 418, 419.  
 Derry fortified, i. 335—its distress, i. 344—besieged, ii. 104, 125—blockaded, ii. 354.  
 Dickson, Rev. William Steel, D.D., iii. 429, 430.  
 Dill, Rev. Samuel, iii. 455, 481.  
 Disputes relative to subscription of Confession of Faith, iii. 164, 249, 401.  
 Dolben, Sir Gilbert, iii. 22.  
 Dopping, Bishop, ii. 429, 435.  
 Douglas, Rev. Joseph, iii. 397.  
 Dowdal, George, primate, i. 27.  
 Down, contests for representation of the county, iii. 381, 382, 398, 440, note.  
 Downham, bishop of Derry, i. 155.  
 Downshire, Marquis of, iii. 399, 439.  
 Drogheda, attempt to establish a college there, i. 9—opposition to preaching of Presbyterian ministers there, iii. 55—invested, ii. 129.  
 Dromore, break of, ii. 348.  
 Drysdale, Mr., ordained, i. 375.  
 Dublin college founded, i. 55—its first provosts and fellows Presbyterians, i. 56, 57, 158—statutes altered, i. 160—Jacobite spirit in it, iii. 113—United Irishmen in it, iii. 417, 418, note.  
 Duchal, Rev. James, iii. 257.  
 Dugud, Rev. William, iii. 187.  
 Dunbar, Rev. George, i. 108, 130, 170, 211.  
 Dungannon, resolutions of volunteers, iii. 377.  
 Dunlop, Rev. Samuel, of Athlone, iii. 168.  
 Echlin, Bishop, i. 98—opposes the Presbyterians, i. 124—his conference with Blair, i. 175—his death, i. 178.  
 Echlin, Mr., of Bangor, iii. 217.  
 Edgar, Rev. John, D.D., iii. 504.  
 Edgar, Rev. Samuel, D.D., iii. 457.  
 Edmonstone, Captain, of Broadisland, i. 303, 309.  
 Edmonstone, Mr. Archibald, iii. 32, note.  
 Edmonstone, Mr. John, ii. 30, 31, note.  
 Edmundson the Quaker, ii. 205, 206, 210.  
 Education of candidates for the ministry, iii. 12, 273, 366, 465.  
 Edward VI.'s reign favourable to the Reformation, i. 26.  
 Ejection of Presbyterian ministers at the Restoration, ii. 250, 252, 253.  
 Elder, Rev. Mr., iii. 230.  
 Elders, ruling, deterred from attending presbyteries, ii. 292—turn the scale in the subscription controversy, iii. 247.  
 Elizabeth ascends the throne, i. 43.  
 Ellis, Major Edmond, ii. 118, 154, 467.  
 Emancipation, Roman Catholic, iii. 440.

- Emigration to America, i. 179, 191;  
iii. 262, 366, 371.
- Emlyn, Rev. Thomas, iii. 13, 14.
- Engagement of the parliament, ii.  
144.
- Engagement, the Scottish, ii. 64, 65.
- Enniskillen, covenant taken at, i.  
433—defence of, ii. 370.
- Episcopal Church of Ireland, low  
state of, iii. 390, 408, 409.
- Episcopal clergy join the presbytery,  
i. 371—pray for and against Wil-  
liam III., ii. 387, 388.
- Erskine, Rev. John, iii. 284, note.
- Evangelical Society of Ulster, iii.  
447.
- Falkland, Lord-Deputy, i. 136.
- Ferguson, Dr. Victor, iii. 157, 188.
- Ferguson, Rev. George, iii. 288.
- Ferguson, Rev. Andrew, of Burt, iii.  
360.
- Ferguson, Rev. Archibald, ii. 9, 31.
- Ferguson, Sir R. A., iii. 360, note.
- Ferrie, Mr. John, iii. 485.
- Fisher, Rev. James, of Glasgow, iii.  
295.
- Fisherwick Pl. Presbyterian church,  
iii. 495.
- Fleetwood, General, ii. 167, 171,  
197, 217.
- Forbes, Sir Arthur, ii. 231, 277,  
288, 291, 302, 309.
- Forfeited estates, i. 72, 75, 77.
- Forward, Mr. John, ii. 322, 350,  
note.
- Franklin, Sir William, ii. 337.
- Freeman, an English conformist, i.  
122.
- French refugees in Ireland, ii. 440,  
441; iii. 76.
- Fullarton, Sir James, i. 56.
- Galbraith, Rev. Mr., i. 217, 218, 466.
- Galey, Daniel, case of, iii. 312.
- Galland, Captain, of Vow, iii. 40.
- Galway, Sheriff of, fined, i. 199.
- Galway, Lord, ii. 433, 434.
- Geddes, Janet, i. 207.
- General Assembly of Presbyterian  
Church in Ireland formed, iii. 507.
- General Convention in Ireland, ii.  
230, 231.
- General Fund established, iii. 63.
- Gentry, proportion of Episcopal and  
Presbyterian, in reign of Queen  
Anne, iii. 27.
- George I., change of policy on ac-  
cession of, iii. 104, 105.
- George II. ascends the throne, iii.  
260.
- George III., address of Irish Presby-  
terians to, iii. 354.
- George IV., congratulatory address  
to, iii. 469, 470.
- Gibson, Dean, i. 97, 118.
- Gibson, James, Esq., iii. 283, note,  
379, note.
- Glamorgan, Earl of, i. 464—his  
treaty discovered, i. 470.
- Glendinning, Rev. James, i. 95, 102,  
106.
- Glenmaquin, battle of, i. 352.
- Goodacre, Hugh, primate, i. 36.
- Goodall, John, case of, ii. 309, 310,  
481.
- Gordon, Rev. James, ii. 42, 337, 366,  
367, note.
- Gowan, Rev. Thomas, ii. 318.
- Graces promised by Charles I., i.  
139.
- Granard, Earl of, ii. 320, 324.
- Grattan, Mr., favours the Presbyte-  
rians, iii. 399.
- Gray, Rev. Robert, iii. 487.
- Gray, case of Rev. William, iii.  
38.
- Gregg, Rev. John, ii. 41, 68.

- Hackett, Bishop, ii. 416.  
 Haliday, Rev. Samuel iii. 134—  
     called to Belfast, iii. 168—refuses  
     to subscribe Confession of Faith,  
     iii. 173—is irregularly installed,  
     iii. 174, 185.  
 Hall, Rev. Thomas, ii. 37.  
 Hamilton, Rev. James, i. 99, 186,  
     211, 367.  
 Hamilton, Sir James, i. 118.  
 Hamilton, Rev. Robert, i. 212.  
 Hamilton, Sir Frederick, i. 415,  
     417, 427.  
 Hamilton, William, of Killileagh, iii.  
     32.  
 Hamilton, Colonel, iii. 40.  
 Hamilton, Rev. George, iii. 447.  
 Hamilton, Rev. Archibald, ii. 315.  
 Hanna, Rev. Samuel, D.D., iii. 447,  
     455, 464.  
 Hanover, Elector of, Irish Presby-  
     terians prepared to take up arms  
     in support of, iii. 102.  
 Hearts of Oak, iii. 370.  
 Henderson, Captain, iii. 40.  
 Henderson, Rev. Alexander, i. 390,  
     463.  
 Henry, Rev. Michael, iii. 287.  
 Henry, Rev. Henry, iii. 455.  
 Henry, Rev. Thomas, iii. 420.  
 Henry VIII. proclaims the royal  
     supremacy in Ireland, i. 20.  
 Heyland, Mr., iii. 40.  
 High-Commission Court, i. 147.  
 Higinbotham, Rev. Robert, iii. 252,  
     306.  
 Hill, Colonel Arthur, i. 298, 303 ;  
     ii. 242.  
 Hopkins, Bishop, ii. 337.  
 Horner, Rev. James, iii. 468.  
 Houston, Rev. James, i. 376.  
 Houston, Rev. David, ii. 310, 313,  
     333, 396.  
 Hoyle, Rev. Dr., i. 388.  
 Hubbard, Rev. Mr., i. 94.  
 Hunter, Captain Henry, ii. 357.  
 Hutcheson, Rev. Alexander, ii. 315.  
 Hutcheson, Dr. Francis, iii. 160,  
     327.  
 Hutcheson, Rev. Mr., of Armagh,  
     iii. 255.  
 Hutton, Alderman, iii. 421, 422.  
 Imputed sin, the doctrine of, denied,  
     iii. 400, 401.  
 Indemnity, Acts of, iii. 153, 316.  
 Independents, ii. 136, 158, 163,  
     221.  
 Intercourse between Synod of Ulster  
     and Church of Scotland renewed,  
     iii. 503.  
 Iredell, Rev. Francis, ii. 455 ; iii.  
     131, 182, 322.  
 Ireland granted by a Papal bull to  
     Henry II., i. 3.  
 Ireton, Henry, ii. 153, 164.  
 Irish language, scheme for preaching  
     in, iii. 60, 62, 136.  
 Irish Church, early, i. 2.  
 Islandmagee, Roman Catholics put  
     to death in, i. 312.  
 Jackson, Rev. James, iii. 347.  
 Jackson, John, of Crieve, iii. 448,  
     note, 473, note.  
 Jackson, Rev. Henry, iii. 297, note.  
 Jackson, Rev. William, iii. 417.  
 Jails of Ulster, number of prisoners  
     of different denominations in, iii.  
     444, 445.  
 James I. ascends the throne, i. 70—  
     encourages the settlement of Scots  
     in Ulster, i. 81—connives at the  
     introduction of their ministers into  
     the Established Church, i. 89.  
 James II. proclaimed, ii. 325—ar-  
     rives in Dublin, ii. 353—escapes to  
     France, ii. 386.

- Kelso, Rev. Robert, ii. 338.  
 Kennedy, Rev. Gilbert, of Dundonald, ii. 300.  
 Kennedy, Rev. Gilbert, of Tullylish, iii. 168, 177, 193.  
 Kennedy, Rev. Gilbert, of Belfast, iii. 278, 357.  
 Kennedy, Rev. Anthony, ii. 39, 40.  
 Ker, Rev. James, ii. 107, 109, 110, 175.  
 Killileagh, break of, ii. 359.  
 King, bishop of Derry, ii. 403, 404, 407, 410—attempts to interfere with the Regium Donum, iii. 6, 7—made archbishop of Dublin, and opposes Presbyterians, iii. 68, 69, 70—appointed one of the lords-justices, iii. 107—supports the Test Act, iii. 122, 125, 145, 147.  
 King, Charles, M.P., iii. 381.  
 Kirk, Major-General, ii. 362, 364, 366, 382.  
 Kirkpatrick, Rev. James, iii. 91—publishes his “Presbyterian Loyalty,” iii. 92.  
 Kneeling at the Lord’s Supper condemned, i. 115.  
 Knox, bishop of Raphoe, i. 107, 111, 112.  
  
 Laird, Rev. William, iii. 308.  
 Lambert, Rev. Ralph, D.D., iii. 38.  
 Lands forfeited in Ulster, i. 72, 75, 77.  
 Lang, Rev. George, iii. 178.  
 Laud, Archbishop, i. 145—his trial, i. 459, 460.  
 Lawson, Captain, i. 300.  
 Leckie, Laird of, i. 244, 267.  
 Leckey, Rev. William, ii. 273, 275, 281.  
 Leechman, Rev. Dr., iii. 333.  
 Leland, Rev. Dr., iii. 131, 352.  
 Leslie, bishop of Raphoe, i. 354 ; ii. 299.  
 Leslie, dean and bishop of Down, i. 127, 162, 178, 179, 221, 222, 224, 228.  
 Letterkenny, covenant taken at, i. 432.  
 Letablere, Rev. John, ii. 442, note.  
 Leven, Earl of, i. 450.  
 Leyden, Irish ministers study at University of, iii. 156.  
 Lisburn attacked, i. 332.  
 Liston, Rev. Mr., ii. 392.  
 Little, Rev. Joseph, iii. 433.  
 Livingston, Rev. John, i. 110, 117, 130, 170, 178, 211, 213, 377 ; ii. 9, 67, 208, 210.  
 Livingston, Rev. William, iii. 202, 282.  
 Loftus, Lord-Justice, i. 141.  
 Long Parliament, i. 263.  
 London, Corporation of, i. 337.  
 Londonderry, Marquis of, iii. 320, note, 439, note.  
 Lords, Irish House of, draw up a representation against Presbyterians, iii. 67.  
 Low Countries send relief to Ireland i. 419.  
 Lundy, governor of Derry, ii. 353, 354.  
 Lynd, Rev. Charles, iii. 132, note ; iii. 314.  
 Macdonnell, Alaster, i. 440, 442.  
 Macgill, Captain James, ii. 353.  
 Mackenna, Mr. William, i. 447.  
 Mackenzie, Rev. John, ii. 336.  
 Mackie, Mr. William, iii. 32, note.  
 Magee, Mrs., her bequests, iii. 397, 514.  
 Magennis, Sir Con, i. 296, 309.  
 Magill, Rev. Robert, iii. 477.



- Mairs, Rev. John, of Newtownards, iii. 175, 207.
- Malcome, Rev. John, of Dunmurry, iii. 163, 252.
- Malcom, Rev. Dr., of Newry, iii. 471.
- Manby, Dr. Peter, ii. 330, 331.
- Margetson, Archbishop, ii. 284, 302.
- Marriages, Presbyterians troubled on account of their, iii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 9—vindicated, iii. 37—prosecutions continued, iii. 101, 131—act respecting them, iii. 272, 378, 510.
- Mary, Queen, i. 41.
- Massacres in 1641, i. 311.
- Massareene, Lord, ii. 244, 258, 267, 270—his death, ii. 302, note.
- Masterton, Rev. Charles, iii. 200, 208, 209, 258.
- Mather, Rev. Samuel, ii. 202.
- Mathews, Rev. Samuel, ii. 417.
- Maxwell, Mr. Arthur, iii. 40, note.
- Maxwell, Rev. John, of Armagh, iii. 321.
- Maxwell, Bishop, i. 255.
- M'Alpine, Rev. James, has a philosophy-school at Killileagh, ii. 443, 452; iii. 35.
- M'Bride, Rev. John, ii. 437, 449—refuses to take the oath of abjuration, iii. 15—retires to Scotland, iii. 37—dies, iii. 168.
- M'Cabbin, Fergus, hospitality of, i. 195.
- M'Claine, Rev. Dr., iii. 289.
- M'Clelland, Rev. Mr., i. 211, 212.
- M'Cormick, Rev. Andrew, ii. 285, 286.
- M'Cracken, Rev. Alexander, refuses to take oath of abjuration, iii. 16—escapes, iii. 64—again in danger, iii. 94—is apprehended, iii. 97—and tried, iii. 98—his death, iii. 121, note.
- M'Dowel, Rev. Benjamin, D.D., iii. 367, 385, 421.
- M'Garraigh, Rev. James, iii. 396.
- M'Mahon, Bishop Heber, ii. 139, 142, 143.
- M'Mahon, Rev. Arthur, iii. 423.
- M'Master, Rev. Robert, iii. 214.
- M'Neill, Mr. Donald, ii. 42.
- M'Neill, Rev. Daniel, i. 474.
- Milton's reply to the presbytery at Belfast, ii. 84.
- Ministers, Scottish, sent to Ireland, i. 420, 449.
- Missionary Fund instituted, iii. 39.
- Missionary movements of Synod of Ulster and Secession, iii. 467, 468, 494.
- Monck, Colonel George, ii. 52, 69, 71, 74, 97, 226, 237.
- Moncrieff, Thomas, case of, ii. 445, 514.
- Monro, General, i. 341, 344, 418; ii. 2, 10, 47.
- Montgomery, Lord, i. 233, 299, 304, 359, 378, 413—taken prisoner, ii. 25, 27, 59, 115, 123, 134.
- Montgomery, Rev. Henry, LL.D., iii. 430, 478, 479, 480, 482, 484, 491.
- Montrose, his successes, ii. 12.
- Moore, Captain James, ii. 274.
- Moore, Captain Hugh, iii. 40.
- Moravians appear in Ulster, iii. 303, note.
- Morell, Rev. Samuel, shot, iii. 370.
- Morgan, Rev. James, D.D., iii. 469, 495, 508.
- Mortimer, Mr., of Ramelton, iii. 40.
- Mount-Alexander, Lord, ii. 276, 280, 283, 320, 337, 340.
- Mountcashel, Lord, ii. 18, note.
- Mountjoy, Viscount, ii. 322.
- Mountnorris, Lord, i. 200.
- Mossom, Bishop, ii. 292, 355.

- Munster Synod, iii. 468, 469, 488, note.
- Murray, Captain Adam, ii. 354.
- Narrative of Seven Synods, iii. 254.
- National Education, controversy respecting, iii. 497, 498.
- Nelson, Rev. John, of Ballykelly, iii. 359.
- Nevin, Rev. Mr., iii. 206—his trial, iii. 219.
- New congregations erected, iii. 110, 111, 317, 493.
- New-Light, first application of the name, iii. 163.
- Nonconformist, play of the, ii. 308.
- Nuncio, Papal, ii. 44, 45.
- Nye, Rev. Philip, i. 391.
- Octennial Act, iii. 372.
- O'Haggerty, a friar, ii. 344.
- Oliver Cromwell, ii. 128.
- O'Neill, Sir Phelim, i. 295, 331, 334, 347.
- O'Neill, Owen Roe, i. 397, 405, 455; ii. 23, 25—his death, ii. 128, note.
- O'Quin, Rev. Jeremiah, ii. 39, 41, 107, 110, 170.
- Orangemen, iii. 415.
- Ordination, Presbyterian, singular mode of, i. 98, 111, 112.
- Ormond, Earl of, i. 401, 413, 458; ii. 49.
- Orr, Rev. Thomas, of Cumber, iii. 157, 225.
- Orrery, Earl of, ii. 243.
- Osborne, Rev. Alexander, ii. 336, 345.
- Osborne, Rev. Joseph, iii. 285, 286.
- Ossory, Earl of, ii. 287, 291.
- Overtures of 1725, iii. 239—of 1828, iii. 480.
- Owen, Dr. John, ii. 136, 137.
- Owen O'Connolly, i. 293, 395, 405, 412, 415; ii. 46, 131, 132.
- Pacific Act, the, iii. 171.
- Parliamentary reform, demand for, iii. 412.
- Patient, Rev. Thomas, ii. 165, 167.
- Patrick's Purgatory, i. 13—suppressed, i. 142.
- Patton, Rev. Isaac, iii. 292, 302.
- Paul, Rev. John, D.D., iii. 476, 479.
- Peden, Rev. Alexander, ii. 295, 320.
- Peebles, Rev. Thomas, i. 356; ii. 42, 304.
- Peep-of-day Boys, iii. 415.
- Petition to Scottish Assembly, i. 360, 445.
- Petition to Long Parliament from Irish Presbyterians, i. 267.
- Places of worship rebuilt and repaired, iii. 493.
- Plantation of Ulster, i. 77, 81, 85.
- Pont, Rev. Mr., i. 218.
- Pont, Mrs., i. 280.
- Population of Ireland of different sects, its amount, iii. 498, 499, 500, 501, 513.
- Porter, Rev. John, of Bushmills, iii. 119.
- Porter, Rev. William, iii. 460, 477, 486, 492.
- Portland, Duke of, iii. 373, 379, 380.
- Presbyterians settle in Ireland, i. 56, 79—encouraged by the state, i. 87, 89—character of early settlers, i. 92—revival of religion among them, i. 101—their ministers deposed, i. 185—refuse to take the Black Oath, i. 236—protest against execution of Charles I., ii. 84—ministers apprehended, ii. 146—again encouraged, ii. 208—promote the restoration of Charles

- II., ii. 229—their ministers ejected, ii. 252—receive a Regium Donum, ii. 316—present a congratulatory address to William III., ii. 376—prepare to take up arms for Elector of Hanover, iii. 102—not the authors of the Rebellion of 1798, iii. 416, 422, 423, 425, 427.
- Presbytery, the first meeting of, at Carrickfergus, i. 357.
- Presbytery, a false one formed, i. 473.
- Presbytery of Antrim cut off from Synod of Ulster, iii. 246, 247—invited to join in scheme of Widows' Fund, iii. 326—and to correspond with synod, iii. 351—send commissioners to synod, iii. 353—its members attend meetings of synod, iii. 444—and join with synod in a deputation to George IV., iii. 469.
- Presbytery of Armagh, iii. 286.
- Presbytery of Dromore, iii. 287, 288, 472.
- Presbytery of Killileagh, iii. 274, 400, 401, note.
- Pretender, threatened invasion of the, iii. 114, 319.
- Printing-press brought to Ireland, i. 51.
- Privy censures, ii. 55, note.
- Proclamation for transporting the Scots to Munster, ii. 177.
- Provosts of Dublin College Presbyterians, i. 57.
- Pullen, Bishop, ii. 427.
- Quakers in Ireland, ii. 205, 207.
- Queen Anne dies, iii. 104.
- Queen Caroline, iii. 336.
- Queen's College, Belfast, iii. 458, note.
- Raphoe, covenant taken at, i. 431—congregation erected there, iii. 342, note.
- Ramsay, Rev. Gilbert, ii. 42, 303.
- Rawdon, Sir Geo., ii. 242, 243, 289.
- Rawdon, Sir Arthur, ii. 343, 348.
- Reading of sermons attacked, iii. 304.
- Rebellion, Irish, of 1641, i. 284—of 1798, iii. 424.
- Reformed Presbytery, iii. 362, 395, 424, 452.
- Regium Donum first granted, ii. 316, 317—increased by William III., ii. 384—letters patent issued by Queen Anne in reference to it, iii. 10—Irish Commons pass a resolution against it, iii. 18—withdrawn, iii. 101—increased, iii. 135—efforts for its additional augmentation, iii. 319—increased, iii. 386, 399, 433—equalised, iii. 503.
- Reid, Rev. Edward, iii. 470.
- Reid, Rev. J. S., D.D., iii. 492, 494, 506.
- Remonstrance of Unitarians, iii. 483.
- Remonstrance of Irish Parliament, i. 262.
- Remonstrants, Irish, origin of, iii. 488.
- Rentoul, Rev. James, iii. 467.
- Representation of Irish Lords against Presbyterian ministers, iii. 67—of Presbyterian ministers against execution of Charles I., ii. 84.
- Restoration, the, ii. 227.
- Revival of religion, i., 101, 102, 103, 104, 120.
- Revolution, the, ii. 336.
- Richardson, Rev. John, iii. 85.
- Richardson, Rev. William, ii. 302, 305, 306, note.
- Ridge, Rev. John, i. 95, 172, 185.
- Right Boys, iii. 390.
- Robarts, Lord, ii. 238, 294, 295.

- Rogers, Rev. John, ii. 168.  
 Rogers, Rev. John, of Cahans, iii. 396, 457.  
 Romish bishops in Ireland before the Reformation, i. 5.  
 Row, Rev. Samuel, i. 212.  
 Rowan, Captain, iii. 473, 474.  
 Rowley, Mr. William, i. 122, 297.  
 Rule, Dr. Gilbert, singular anecdote told by him, ii. 222, note.  
 Rump Parliament, ii. 78.
- Sabbath profanation, prevalence of, iii. 406, 407.  
 Saintleger, Sir Anthony, lord-deputy, i. 27.  
 Sample of Jet-Black Prelatic Calumny, iii. 88.  
 Schear-Saullis, battle of, ii. 142.  
 Schism Act extended to Ireland, iii. 103.  
 Schomberg, Duke of, ii. 372, 374, 386.  
 School of philosophy at Antrim, ii. 318—at Newtownards, ii. 452—and at Killileagh, ii. 443.  
 Scotch Presbyterian chaplains required to conform to Episcopal Church, iii. 124.  
 Scott, Rev. John, i. 356.  
 Scottish forces leave Ireland, ii. 62, 63.  
 Seasonable Advice, the, iii. 189.  
 Seceders appear in Ireland, iii. 283—divided into Burghers and Anti-burghers, iii. 302—increase, iii. 307—two synods of theirs formed, iii. 388, 389—permitted to swear with uplifted hand, iii. 379—obtain Regium Donum, iii. 387—rapidly increase, iii. 450—unite with the Synod of Ulster, iii. 506.  
 Secession, rise of the, iii. 277.  
 Semple, Rev. John, i. 113, 211.  
 Semple, Rev. John, of Anahilt, iii. 345.  
 Semple, Rev. William, ii. 43, 315.  
 Serious Warning of Synod of Ulster, iii. 298.  
 Shaw, Mr. James, i. 299; ii. 36.  
 Shaw, Captain, of the Bush, iii. 40, note.  
 Shaw, Rev. Anthony, ii. 37.  
 Shaw, Rev. James, ii. 302.  
 Shute, Mr., an eminent dissenter, iii. 141.  
 Simpson, Rev. James, i. 356.  
 Simpson, Rev. Professor, iii. 159, 327.  
 Sixty-one Presbyterian ministers ejected, ii. 252.  
 Smithurst, Rev. J., iii. 474.  
 Statistics of jails of Ulster, iii. 445—of workhouses, iii. 512—of population, iii. 501, 513.  
 Staveland, Rev. William, iii. 405, 424, note.  
 Stephenson, Rev. S. M., iii. 369.  
 Stevenson, Captain, iii. 40, note.  
 Stewart, Rev. Andrew, i. 108—his death, i. 171.  
 Stewart, Sir William, i. 219, 220, 333.  
 Stewart, Mr. Henry, i. 245, 278.  
 Stewart, Mr. Archibald, i. 299.  
 Stewart, Mr. Robert, of Irry, i. 328.  
 Stewart, Mr. William, of Killymoon, iii. 8.  
 Stewart, Mr. Alexander, of Newtownards, iii. 318, 319, 531.  
 Stewart, Colonel James, M.P., iii. 378, 413.  
 Stewart, Rev. Robert, D.D., iii. 468, 482.  
 Stewart, Sir Alexander, ii. 95.  
 Stewart, Lieutenant-Colonel William, ii. 363.  
 Stipend of ministers, iii. 265, 318, 342, 404, 438.



- Stock, bishop of Killala, iii. 393.  
 Stone, Primate, iii. 335.  
 Strabane Academy, iii. 403.  
 Students' prayer-meeting, iii. 504.  
 Subscribers and non-subscribers, iii. 183.  
 Subscription to Westminster Confession of Faith, ii. 493; iii. 13, 128, 162, 171, 274, 312, 401, 472, 480, 501.  
 Supplications to Synod of Ulster, iii. 296, 297.  
 Swanston, Rev. John, iii. 294, 306, 307.  
 Sydney, Sir Henry, holds a parliament, i. 50.  
 Synge, Rev. Edward, ii. 435; iii. 38.  
 Synod (Romish) of Kilkenny, i. 398, 399.  
 Synod of Ulster, ii. 222—proposal to constitute it by delegation, iii. 54, 349—annual meeting of 1716, iii. 127—of 1828, iii. 481.  
 Taylor on Original Sin, iii. 296, 335.  
 Taylor, Bishop Jeremy, ii. 225, 241, 246.  
 Taylor, Rev. Timothy, ii. 138, 158, 159, 161, 163, 215.  
 Tennent, Rev. John, iii. 340.  
 Tennent, Sir James Emerson, iii. 340, note.  
 Tennent, Rev. Gilbert, iii. 357.  
 Test Act, Irish, iii. 20—its operation in Derry and elsewhere, iii. 28, 44—petition against it, iii. 31—attempts to repeal it defeated, iii. 42, 122, 271—its repeal  
 Third congregation of B  
 lished, iii. 186.  
 Thomson, Mr. John, iii.  
 Thomson, Rev. John, iii.  
 471.  
 Thornton, mayor of Derry, i. 413, 427; ii. 5.  
 Tisdall, Rev. William, D.D., iii. 49, 77, 82, 99, 104, 106, 120.  
 Tithes enjoyed by Irish Presbyterian ministers, i. 123; ii. 200, 214.  
 Toleration Act passed, iii. 151.  
 Tone, Theobald Wolfe, iii. 416.  
 Trail, Rev. William, ii. 321.  
 Travers, Walter, a Presbyterian, and first provost of Dublin college, i. 57.  
 Turner, Sir James, i. 343.  
 Tyrconnel, Lord-Lieutenant, ii. 328, 332, 333, 338, 339, 345.  
 Ulster Plantation, i. 72, 78, 80, 81.  
 Unitarian controversy, iii. 473, 475, 483, 486, 489.  
 Unitarianism, protest against, iii. 454.  
 United Irishmen, iii. 416, 417, 418, 419.  
 Union between Great Britain and Ireland, iii. 431.  
 Union of Burghers and Antiburghers, iii. 467.  
 Union of Secession and Synod of Ulster, iii. 506.  
 University, a second proposed in Ireland, iii. 432, note.  
 Unqualified subscription to Confession of Faith, iii. 502.  
 Upton, Captain Henry, i. 104, 299.  
 Upton, Mr. Arthur, ii. 340, 376; iii. 31, 118, 140, 141, 204, 219.  
 Ussher, T. B. D. D., i. 128, 129, 139.  
 , 147, 149,  
 376.

- Voters, two-thirds of the, must concur in a call to a minister, iii. 273.
- Walker, Rev. George, ii. 354, 369, 383, 386, 398.
- Walkington, Bishop, ii. 446.
- Wallace, Captain James, i. 439; ii. 7, 39, 285.
- Wandesford, Deputy, i. 277.
- Waring, Mr. Westenra, iii. 79, 97.
- Warning, A Serious, iii. 298.
- Warning, A Solemn and Seasonable, ii. 8.
- Waugh, Rev. Dr., of London, iii. 455.
- Weir, Rev. Mr., captured, i. 440—dies, i. 455.
- Welsh, Rev. Josias, i. 106, 130, 170—his death, i. 170.
- Wentworth, Lord-Deputy, i. 134, 143, 156, 174, 198, 200, 214, 221, 248—Lord Strafford, i. 257, 265.
- Westminster Assembly, i. 383; ii. 33.
- White, Rev. James, iii. 321.
- Widows' Fund, iii. 324, 451, note.
- William III. arrives in Ireland, ii. 381—grants the Regium Donum, ii. 384—abolishes oath of supremacy, ii. 399—his death, iii. 6.
- Williams, Rev. Dr., iii. 136.
- Willoughby, Sir Francis, ii. 46.
- Wilson, James, M.P., iii. 373.
- Winter, Rev. Samuel, ii. 153, 167.
- Witherspoon, Rev. Dr., iii. 332, 357, note.
- Woodward, bishop of Cloyne, iii. 389.
- Worcester, battle of, ii. 176.
- Workhouses of Ulster, iii. 512, note.
- Young, Dr. John, iii. 483.











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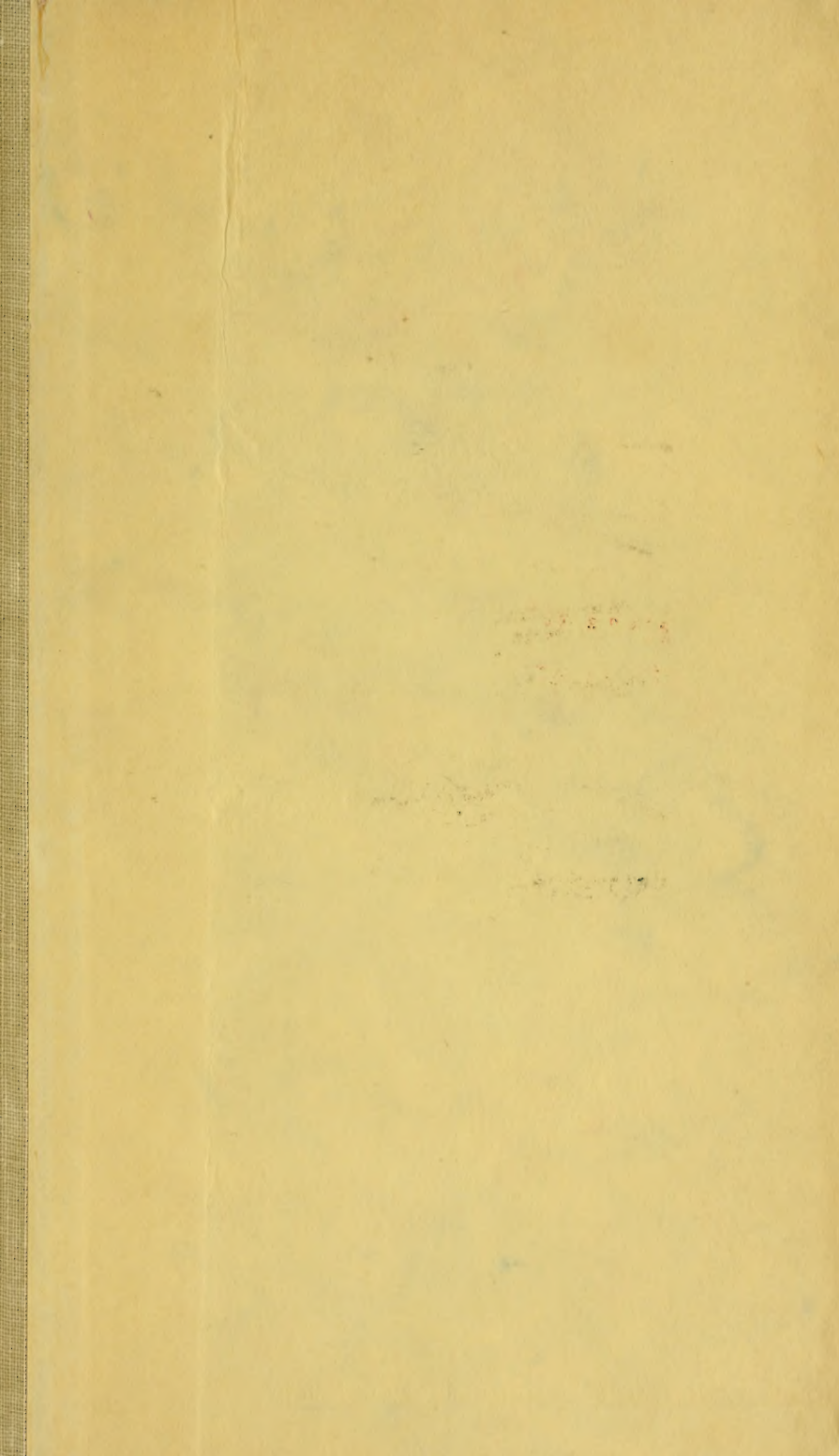
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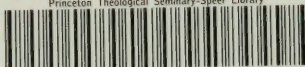
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